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Sherwood Forest Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Breast Unit Open Access Follow Up (OAFU)

Information for patients and carers



OAFU telephone: 01623 676174 – 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday
Clinic 14, King's Mill Hospital, Mansfield Road, Sutton in Ashfield, NG17 4JL

What is Open Access Follow Up?

Open access is a new type of follow up within the Breast Unit at Sherwood Forest Hospitals for patients who have had surgery for breast cancer.

It is where routine, clinical examination type appointments with a surgeon are replaced by a system where patients can call us if they have a problem, so they don't have to come to hospital for routine appointments when they are feeling well and symptom free.

Why has Open Access Follow Up been introduced?

The self-management follow up process has been introduced regionally as it has been shown to be better for patients. It means patients no longer have to make unnecessary trips to the hospital when they are feeling well.

Patients often find clinical appointments are a source of anxiety, and knowing an appointment is due can lead to putting off reporting worrying signs and symptoms as the appointment 'is not too far away'.

Also, new problems are unlikely to be picked up by clinical examination alone; most are identified by patients themselves in between routine appointments.

Is Sherwood Forest Hospitals the only hospital to have Open Access Follow Up?

No (although it is known by different names in different places). More and more hospitals across the country are changing the way patients are followed up following treatment for breast cancer.

What information will I be given?

In addition to this introduction leaflet to Open Access, you will also receive a treatment summary following your post-operative results appointment (this will arrive with your clinic letter).

Treatment summaries include information on your diagnosis, surgery, treatments, medications, possible side effects and any signs or symptoms to report to the Open Access telephone number in a handy table for easy access. Your GP also receives a copy.

You will also be invited to attend an end of treatment nurse-led workshop which is timed specifically to your pathway. A presentation is given to educate on being breast and body aware, including any specific symptoms you should report, along with information on what to expect following treatment and health and wellbeing information. A handbook is given at the presentation containing helpful information and health and wellbeing leaflets are available at the workshop.

Will I still be able to access the breast service in the event of concerns?

Yes. You can contact the Open Access helpline on 01623 676174 with any queries or concerns until you are discharged from the Breast Unit. The phone is manned 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.

Your call will be answered by one of the breast nurse team who will ask you some questions in order to appropriately action your concern. If no one answers, please leave a message with your details and concern; messages are picked up throughout the day and your call would be answered within 24 hours.

Concerns are reviewed by a senior nurse, surgeon or oncologist and you may be contacted to either discuss your concern further or to be informed of an appointment or an appropriate diagnostic investigation if it is appropriate.

Will I continue to have routine mammograms?

Yes. Unless it has been otherwise specified at your surgical appointment that these are not required, you will continue to be called for yearly mammograms for at least five years after your treatment, or until you are the right age to join the national NHS Breast Screening Programme. If you do not require mammograms both you and your GP will be informed of this in your post-operative results letter.

Are there any other regular tests that I may need to have?

Within your post-operative results letter and treatment summary, it will mention if you need any additional regular checks such as bone density scans (DEXA scans). These scans can tell if you are developing bone thinning, which can lead to a condition called osteoporosis. These are organised depending on your treatments and you will receive appointments when appropriate.

What are the signs and symptoms I need to look out for?

- A lump or a swelling in your breast, in the skin after a mastectomy, above your collarbone or in the neck area, or under your arm.
- Any skin changes including dimpling, puckering, redness or raised spots on your breast or mastectomy scar.
- Nipple discharge.
- Lymphoedema (affected side arm swelling).
- Any new ongoing pain in any part of your body, especially in the back or hips, that does not improve with pain killers, and which is often worse at night.
- Pins and needles and/or a loss of sensation or weakness in your arms or legs.
- Unexplained weight loss and loss of appetite.
- A constant feeling of nausea.
- Discomfort or swelling under your ribs or across your upper abdomen.
- A dry cough or a feeling of breathlessness.
- Severe headaches, usually worse in the morning.

How the helpline works

Following your surgical results appointment, you will be moved onto the appropriate personalised follow up pathway which was decided by the Multidisciplinary Team on review of your breast cancer diagnosis and treatment plan.

You will be invited to a nurse-led workshop where an education session is given around the Open Access Service, signs and symptoms of recurrence, treatment side effects and health and wellbeing information.

Within your five years of follow up, you can contact the breast nurse team on the Open Access helpline to discuss any questions or concerns. These will be reviewed, and appointments or advice generated and communicated to you within 14 days.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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