

Patient information

Considering Risk-Reducing Mastectomy Appointment

Liverpool Cancer Psychology Service

Why have I been referred to Clinical Psychology?

You have been referred to the Liverpool Cancer Psychology Service because you are thinking about having a risk reducing mastectomy (RRM). This may be because you have a personal experience of cancer or because you are at higher risk of developing breast cancer due to your family history or genetic status (e.g., BRCA 1 or BRCA 2 gene alterations).

Risk reducing mastectomy involves removing breast tissue which, as far as we are aware, is healthy. Whilst this does not eliminate the risk of cancer, it does reduce the risk. It is a big decision to remove healthy tissue and it is a major surgical procedure that cannot be reversed.

What is a psychological decision-making appointment?

Meeting with a clinical psychologist is a routine part of the risk reducing surgery pathway and is recommended for women who are considering risk reducing mastectomy surgery. It is a chance to talk through your decision in more detail with someone who is independent from your medical team and personal support network.

The clinical psychologist does not make any decisions about whether or not someone can have risk reducing surgery, however women can find it very helpful to talk about their thoughts, feelings and motivations about having the surgery.

What is a Clinical Psychologist?

Clinical psychologists are trained to help people make sense of how they think, feel, and behave, and making a decision comes into this, which is why the appointment is with our service.

Clinical psychologists also work with people who are experiencing psychological distress. This might involve helping people to understand and makes changes in the way they think, feel and cope.

What will happen at my first appointment?

The appointment will last for up to an hour. The clinical psychologist will ask you about the reasons why you are considering risk reducing mastectomy and any concerns that you might have.

This will include (where appropriate) topics such as:

- Your personal experience of cancer and any previous breast surgery/reconstruction.
- Your experience of genetic testing (if applicable).
- Your support network.
- Your expectations of surgery and reconstruction.
- Previous psychological history.
- Your thoughts and feelings about your appearance and body image.
- Potential implications of having the surgery on day-to-day life (e.g., time off work, recovery, relationships etc.).
- Making sure you have all the information needed to make the decision and, if relevant, agreeing if any further information or support would be helpful (and where this should be from).

What happens next?

It may be that one appointment is all that is needed to talk about your decision to undergo a risk reducing mastectomy. Sometimes these discussions may require more time, and you can ask for another appointment if this will help you through your decision-making process.

After the appointments are complete, the clinical psychologist will write to your surgeon (or the person who referred you to our service) with a summary of our conversations and any recommendations that have been agreed.

Sometimes women might need more information about the surgery and the clinical psychologist can arrange for them to talk to the person in the medical team who can help them best.

A further outcome of the assessment process might be that the need for psychological support or therapy is identified. It might be that the Cancer Psychology Service is best placed to offer this support, or other services might be more appropriate. The clinical psychologist will discuss this with you, if relevant.

Is what I tell the Clinical Psychologist confidential?

During the appointment, the clinical psychologist will make notes, and these are typed up into an electronic form, which is stored on the Cancer Psychology Shared Drive. No other doctors or nurses in the hospital see these notes.

The Clinical Psychologist will make brief notes in your hospital record to record when they met you and what the purpose of the appointment was.

Due to the purpose of the appointment, the clinical psychologist will write to your surgical team to summarise the conversations you have had and any recommendations that have been agreed. It is common for a copy of this to also be sent to you and your GP.

If there is any sensitive information that you would rather not have shared in this way, please discuss this in advance with the clinical psychologist.

There are two situations in which the clinical psychologist will have a duty to break confidentiality and will not be able to keep information private:

- If a court of law instructs them to.
- If you tell the psychologist something that makes them concerned that you or someone else is at risk of serious harm.

If you want to know more about confidentiality, it is a good idea to ask your clinical psychologist early on, so they can discuss this with you and answer any questions that you may have.

What if I cannot attend the appointment?

We appreciate that sometimes people need to cancel appointments. Please let us know if you are unable to attend and we will endeavour to rebook your appointment to a more convenient time.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

يمكن توفير جميع المعلومات المتعلقة بالمرضى الموافق عليهم من قبل انتمان المستشفى عند الطلب بصيغ أخرى، بما في ذلك لغات أخرى وبطرق تسهل قراءتها وبالحروف الطباعية الكبيرة وبالصوت وبطريقة برايل للمكفوفين وبطريقة مون والكترونياً.

所有經信托基金批准的患者資訊均可以其它格式提供，包括其它語言、易讀閱讀軟件、大字體、音頻、盲文、穆恩體 (Moon) 盲文和電子格式，敬請索取。

در صورت تمایل میتوانید کلیه اطلاعات تصویب شده توسط اتحادیه در رابطه با بیماران را به اشکال مختلف در دسترس داشته باشید، از جمله به زبانهای دیگر، به زبان ساده، چاپ درشت، صوت، خط مخصوص کوران، مون و بصورت روی خطی موجود است.

زانباری پیوهندیدار بهو نهخوشانهی له لایمن تراستهوه پهسند کراون، نهگس داوا بکریت له فورماتکهانی تردا بریتی له زمانهکانی تر، نیزی رید (هاسان خویندنهوه)، چاپی گهوره، شریتی دهنگ، هیئی موون و نهلیکترونیکی همیه.

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Dhammaan warbixinta bukaanleyda ee Ururka ee la oggol yahay waxaa marka la codsado lagu heli karaa nuskhado kale, sida luqado kale, akhris fudud, far waaweyn, dhegeysi, farta braille ee dadka indhaha la', Moon iyo nidaam eletaroonig ah.