

Virtual ward

Information and advice for patients

What is a virtual ward?

Thousands of people across England are benefitting from being treated at home on a virtual ward. This innovative approach is delivering high quality care, safely and conveniently for people at home – where they would rather be. Virtual wards provide hospital-level care and remote monitoring for patients who would otherwise be in hospital, either by preventing admissions or allowing them to return home sooner to continue their treatment at home. **You will still be under the care of a Consultant doctor who reviews your care, each day you are on the virtual ward.**

Selected patients in Sandwell & West Birmingham can benefit from virtual wards, receiving care from our team of specialist healthcare professionals, in the place you call home. You will be given a personalised care plan, to keep you stable and comfortable in familiar surroundings.

What is the benefit to me?

Research shows that being at home - where patients can see friends, family, and pets - is much better for your physical health, mental wellbeing and overall recovery rate. We also know that if people stay too long in hospital they can experience serious reduction in muscle strength, which can be hard to recover from. This approach enables you to have all the benefits of home with the wraparound care of a dedicated clinical team reviewing you remotely, and face-to-face when needed. The positive impact of this is that you are more likely to maintain your independence at home and are less likely to need to be re-admitted to hospital.

What will happen next?

Your healthcare clinician will assess whether you are suitable to receive care at home from a virtual ward team. If you and your carer consent to this, they will refer you into the virtual ward. Patients can be transferred to the virtual ward from hospital wards, Accident & Emergency departments, or following an assessment in your home. Depending on your needs, you could receive either daily telephone calls, home visits, a range of different medical devices to help you self-monitor at home, or a combination of all three. We discuss your care with your named Consultant doctor, every single day until your symptoms have improved, and the virtual ward team doctor is happy you are well enough to be discharged off the virtual ward and back to your GP or other community health services. Most people will feel better within 2 weeks.

If you have any questions about this document, please speak to your nurse or doctor.

Virtual ward

Information and advice for patients

What should I do if I feel unwell?

If your symptoms worsen quickly, please use the information below to assess yourself.

Go to A+E immediately or call 999 if:

- you're so breathless that you're unable to say short sentences when resting
- your breathing has suddenly got worse
- you cough up blood
- you feel cold and sweaty with pale or blotchy skin
- you develop a rash that looks like small bruises or bleeding under the skin and does not fade when you roll a glass over it
- you collapse or faint
- you feel agitated, confused, or very drowsy
- you've stopped peeing or are peeing much less than usual

Ring your virtual ward team or 111 as soon as possible if:

- you're feeling gradually more unwell or more breathless
- you have difficulty breathing when you stand up or move around
- you feel very weak, achy, or tired
- you're shaking or shivering
- you've lost your appetite
- you sense that something is wrong
- you're unable to care for yourself - for example, tasks like washing and dressing or making food are too difficult

Good signs and readings that show you may be improving:

- Gradual improvement
- Fully mobile, able to manage stairs (if this is normal for you), not confused
- Normal eating and drinking

Virtual ward

Information and advice for patients

Further Information

Use the link or scan the QR code to watch a video by Sandwell & West Birmingham NHS Trust, about virtual wards.



Weblink: <https://youtu.be/MqTldxHARpQ>

Virtual ward contact

0121 507 2664 (pick option 1, then option 4)

8am-8pm 7 days a week

If you feel unwell outside of these hours, please call 111 or 999

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact SWB Library Services on ext 3587 or email swbh.library@nhs.net.



A Teaching Trust of The University of Birmingham
Incorporating City, Sandwell and Rowley Regis Hospitals
© Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust

ML7030
Issue Date: April 2023
Review Date: April 2026