



**Colorectal Surgery Department
Colchester Hospital**
Tel: 01206 742356

NHS

**East Suffolk and
North Essex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Open access follow-up programme

What is open access follow-up?

At Colchester Hospital we have introduced a patient-centred approach to cancer surveillance once your treatment has finished. This will save you coming to the hospital when you feel well and symptom-free to receive the results of your routine surveillance investigations. We have replaced the routine, clinical examination type appointments with the open access follow-up programme which uses remote monitoring.

This will mean that you no longer have to come to hospital if you are feeling well and do not have any worrying symptoms but allows you to call your clinical team when or if you have any worries or concerns regarding your cancer recovery.

Why have you given me this leaflet?

You have been given this leaflet to explain open access follow-up which the Colorectal team at Colchester Hospital has put in place for patients who have completed treatment for colorectal cancer and have recovered well from that treatment.

Why have we introduced open access follow-up?

Patients often feel anxious as a routine follow-up appointment approaches. Sometimes they are tempted to put off reporting worrying signs and symptoms until the time of their appointment,

which may delay any investigations required.

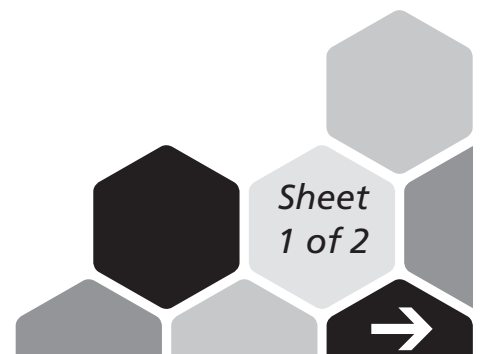
We have also found that patients are often much better at spotting changes in their condition. Often regular checks are much less likely to find important changes than patients are able to notice themselves.

Also, it has been proved that new problems are unlikely to be picked up by clinical examination alone. Most are identified by patients themselves, in between routine appointments.

Routine appointments cost you valuable time and money in travel costs.

Is Colchester Hospital the only hospital to have open access follow-up?

No (although it may be called different things in different places). More and more hospitals across the country are changing the way patients are followed up after treatment for colorectal cancer. The NHS has asked hospitals to support this way of following-up all cancer patients.



What information will I be given?

At the end of your treatment someone from your clinical team will explain to you how the follow-up service works. You will be taught what signs and symptoms to look for and for any special symptoms for which you may need to seek more advice.

You will be given written information on:

- your diagnosis and any medication required
- the treatment you have had and the possible on-going effects
- signs and symptoms to report to us
- being aware of changes in your body
- how to use the telephone line which gives you fast access to your clinical team if you need it
- the process if you need to be booked back into clinic at any time in the future.

Will I still be able to access the colorectal service if I have concerns?

Yes, you can call the team on the dedicated telephone number **01206 742356** if you have any queries or problems, and you will be encouraged to do so. This has an answer machine and is monitored between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday and you will be called back by a member of the team.

If after talking to the team it is thought appropriate for you to come back to clinic to be seen, you will be offered an appointment within 14 days of your telephone call, or if appropriate investigations will be organised prior to the appointment.

Will I continue to have routine follow-up tests?

Yes, unless it has been otherwise specified at the end of your treatment, you will need to continue to have regular CEA tests, CT scans and colonoscopies for at least five years. A plan of your surveillance tests will be given after your first appointment.

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

Following your treatment you and your GP will be told if you need any additional regular checks. If required these will be organised in line with local arrangements where you will receive clear instructions on what you will need to do.

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

- Change in bowel habit (lasting more than a week)
- Blood in or on the stool
- Recurrent new onset abdominal pain, again not just a single episode
- Unexplained weight loss (excluding dietary changes or viral infections)
- Increasing tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal swelling or tenderness



How open access follow-up works

At the end of your treatment, you will have an outpatient appointment where the following will be covered:

- Explanation of your final diagnosis
- How you have recovered from the treatment you have had and some of the on-going effects
- Signs and symptoms to report back to us should they occur
- A plan of your surveillance tests for the following five years
- How to find further help and support (with any referrals being made for needs identified)
- The direct telephone number on which you can contact us with any symptoms or concerns

Using the helpline number

If you need to ring this number, please leave a short message including your name, hospital number and telephone number on the answer phone.

This is checked regularly from Monday to Friday between 9 am and 5 pm, and we aim to phone back by the next working day.

A member of the team will talk through with you the symptoms or concerns that you have and decide with you whether you need to be brought back into clinic or have any further diagnostic tests. If they feel this is necessary then you will be offered a clinic appointment within 14 days of phoning the helpline.

Your experience matters

We value your feedback. Please help us improve our services by answering a simple question, in our online survey – “Overall, how was your experience of our services?”

This survey is known as “The Friends and Family Test”.

You can either scan this QR code with a smart phone camera:



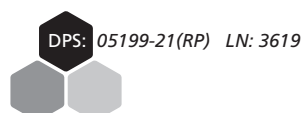
Or type the following web address into your browser:

www.esneft.nhs.uk/get-involved/your-views-matter/friends-and-family-test/

Thank you very much.

Please ask if you need this leaflet in an alternative format.

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Colchester Hospital, Turner Road, Colchester CO4 5JL
www.esneft.nhs.uk



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