



# Your OAFU bowel cancer follow-up

**Welcome to Open Access Follow-up Service. This leaflet is for patients who have had treatment for bowel cancer, and their relatives and carers. It explains how the Open Access Follow-Up (OAFU) arrangement works as you and your clinical nurse specialist (CNS) have agreed that your ongoing colorectal cancer follow-up will take this format.**

**Patient's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hospital number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

This leaflet will explain:

- The signs and symptoms to look out for that might indicate a return or spread of the disease.
- The helpline you can contact if you have any symptoms, concerns or queries.
- The arrangements for any investigations, such as CT scans, blood tests and colonoscopies, and why these are important, as well as the process for getting the results.
- What happens if your results are abnormal.
- What information and ongoing support is available to you and your family.

We will also send your GP full details of your treatment and follow up programme.

## What is Open Access Follow-Up?

OAFU is a type of follow up and aftercare for people who have received treatment for bowel cancer. Routine follow-up appointments are replaced with an arrangement that allows you to contact us directly if you have concerns about your bowel function, have any new symptoms you would like to report, or have questions about your treatment.

OAFU gives you access to a dedicated helpline (**07932 126638**) for reporting symptoms, worries or concerns. You will receive a response within 24 working hours (Monday-Friday). Depending on your symptoms, we may give telephone advice, suggest you see your GP or ask you to be seen in one of our rapid access clinics. We may also seek advice from your consultant and call you back.

## Why have we introduced OAFU?

We have introduced OAFU as this arrangement has been trialled in other hospitals and patients have found it a better way of following-up on their care. It means that you don't have to make unnecessary trips to the hospital at times when you are feeling perfectly well. Patients often find traditional clinical appointments are a source of anxiety and can lead to them being tempted to put off reporting worrying signs and symptoms if a routine clinical appointment is 'not too far away.'

Compassionate

Aspirational

Resourceful

Excellent

Also, it has been proven that new problems are unlikely to be picked up by clinical examination alone. Most problems are identified by surveillance investigations, which you will continue to have as part of this programme.

OAFU gives you the freedom to get on with your life with the reassurance of fast advice and a prompt clinic appointment should you need one.

### **How does the OAFU hotline work?**

The OAFU hotline is monitored between 9am-4pm Monday-Friday, excluding Bank Holidays and weekends. A member of the colorectal specialist nursing team will call you back within 24 hours or the next working day.

The team may suggest further investigations, depending on your symptoms. If appropriate, you will be offered a clinic appointment within 14 working days, or sooner if clinically urgent.

### **What symptoms should I look out for?**

If you experience any of the following symptoms, please call our OAFU hotline.

- A change in bowel habit lasting more than two weeks.
- Blood in or on your stool (poo).
- Mucous on or mixed with your stool.
- Abdominal pain, discomfort, excessive wind and bloating.
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Unexplained loss of appetite.
- Unexplained fatigue or tiredness.
- If you need support to regain bowel control following your surgery or stoma reversal.

### **Your follow-up schedule**

- You will receive appointments every six months for investigations. These investigations are part of our standard colorectal cancer surveillance programme and are listed in the table on the next page.
- You will receive a letter with your results within four weeks of your investigation. Instructions for your next investigation will be enclosed.
- **If any of your results are abnormal, the colorectal specialist nursing team will contact you directly to discuss this and agree a plan with you.**

### **Will I still be able to contact the colorectal cancer nursing team if I have symptoms or concerns?**

Yes. You can call the team on our dedicated OAFU hotline. Messages will be returned within 24 hours or the next working day (Monday to Friday). The hotline number is: **07932 126638**.

## Investigation schedule

	Appointment date	CT/MRI	Blood tests	Colonoscopy	HNA	
3 months						
6 months					fill	
1 year						
1½ years						
2 years						
2½ years						
3 years						
3½ years						
4 years						
5 years						

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

RBFT Berkshire Cancer Centre, December 2023.

Next review due: December 2025