How long will I have to wait for surgery if I am not booked on a list but come in as an emergency patient?
If you are an emergency patient you will be placed on a list. The list can change many times, depending on patient health needs, theatre availability, staff and equipment.

You may need to stay in hospital until a time becomes available, or you may be able to leave, and be re-booked on a scheduled list, if you are well enough to do so.

What happens if my operation is cancelled?
The nursing staff will inform you that your surgery has been cancelled and ensure that you receive something to eat and drink. The doctors may need to see you before you go home but this is not always necessary.

If your case was booked from the waiting list, the coordinator from your treating team will be in touch with you, to re-schedule your operation.

If you are an emergency patient, you may need to stay in hospital until a time becomes available, or you may be able to leave and be re-scheduled at a later date.

When will I be able to eat after my operation?
The doctors doing your operation will determine when you can eat and what you can eat. The nursing staff will give you this information.

When you are allowed to eat, and well enough to do so, the nursing staff will provide you with a meal.

I have a special diet, will this be catered for?
The Alfred provides meals for hundreds of patients every day. Whilst we do our best to cater for all dietary preferences, sometimes these needs cannot be met.

If you have a special dietary need, please tell the nursing staff when you arrive at the hospital.
There are 10 operating theatres at The Alfred and 6 in the Alfred Centre. Some of the patients are pre-booked (elective), and others are emergency patients.

Different surgical teams are allocated different theatres in a weekly timetable. If you are an elective patient, you have been placed on a specific theatre list, in a predetermined order.

How does the theatre list work on the day?
Each pre-booked patient is placed in an order for each theatre’s list.

The list depends on availability of staff, equipment and theatres. It also depends on the health needs of the patients.

This list can vary because of changes in the availability of staff or equipment, or the need to use the theatre for an emergency, life-saving operation.

Why did I have to come in so early?
Your admission time is determined by your surgical team. Sometimes, you may need a particular blood test, x-ray or other test before having your operation.

The theatre list can also be changed on the day, and whilst you may have originally been scheduled for the 2nd or 3rd case, you may be moved to an earlier slot.

Why am I fasting?
Anaesthetic interferes with some of the natural reflexes of the body.

This includes the one that keeps food in the stomach and prevents it coming back up and into the lungs – ‘going down the wrong way’. If your stomach has food or drink in it, there’s a risk of vomiting, or bringing what is in your stomach up into your throat. If this happens, the food could spill into your lungs, affecting your breathing, damaging your lungs, and possibly leading to pneumonia, which is a serious illness.

Why can’t I chew gum while fasting?
Chewing gum can increase stomach acidity and stomach volume, which increases the risk of food coming back up and into the lungs. The chewing gum may also accidentally be swallowed.

Why can’t I smoke while I am fasting?
The longer you don’t smoke before an operation the better. Smoking can increase the contents in your stomach and increase the risk of the contents of your stomach coming up into your throat and into your lungs.

After the operation, smoking will also affect your wound healing. Programs to help you stop smoking are available to you whilst you are an inpatient at The Alfred; speak to your nurse if you would like more information.

Why have the nurses given me water to have with my tablets?
You can have a small amount of water to take your regular medications, or any medications ordered by your doctor.

Should I take my regular medications?
You should take your normal medications as instructed by the pre-admission clinic or unit coordinator. If you are unsure, please ask a nurse.

When in hospital, do not take any medication unless given to you by a nurse or doctor.

I’m not having a general anaesthetic, why am I fasting?
Rarely, if there is an unexpected problem or emergency, the doctor may need to change your anaesthetic from local to general.

But I am a diabetic, I have to eat!
While you are fasting, the nurses will take your blood sugar regularly (every 2 hours), to check that it is not getting low.

If necessary, they will contact the doctors, who may order some intravenous fluids. If at any time while you are waiting for surgery, you feel unwell or feel symptoms of low blood sugar, please tell your nurse.