

Patient information factsheet

Bowel retraining and continence education (BRaCE)

Your consultant believes that you would benefit from attending our bowel retraining and continence education sessions in order to improve your bowel function. This factsheet explains what we do and how the service may be able to help improve your symptoms.

Who are we?

A team of consultants, clinical scientists and specialist nurses based in the pelvic floor unit. We work together to improve the bowel function of our patients through a series of appointments offering:

- advice
- bowel retraining
- education
- advanced therapies.

Our service

It is estimated that around 6.5 million people in the UK today (1 in 10 of us) have some form of bowel problem. In a move to try to make our service more efficient we developed a new patient pathway that allows us to provide patients starting treatment for bowel problems with information more quickly.

The BRaCE four step pathway will give you the advice, support, information and education necessary to improve and optimise your bowel function. Each of the steps will be delivered approximately 10-12 weeks apart. There will be “homework” in the form of therapy and lifestyle changes which you will need to complete between each step.

This four step pathway is designed to deliver the more basic information, advice and education in a group session, moving on to more complex and tailored therapies at each step (individual sessions).

Step 1	1.5 hour group online session.
Step 2	Individual session or telephone consultation (30 minutes)
Step 3	Individual session or telephone consultation (30 minutes)
Step 4	Individual face to face session (30 minutes)

We find many of our patients really benefit from the advice given in steps 1 and 2 and don't need to continue through the full pathway. For others it may be necessary to offer stages 3 and 4 and then involve your consultant for review. We tailor this pathway to suit your individual needs.

Patient information factsheet

What to expect at the BRaCE online group session (step 1)

The group session is the first step towards improving your bowel function.

It is delivered to small groups of patients with similar bowel problems by specialist nurses in a relaxed, informal environment via Microsoft Teams (online). Sessions are held separately for women and men, and will provide information and advice relating to your bowel condition.

During the session you will learn how the bowel works. You will also be given advice relating to diet, lifestyle, self-help, toileting, medication and exercises.

The session is designed to enhance your knowledge and help you learn some valuable tools to help manage your bowel function.

During the online group session you will not need to share any personal information about your condition and your presence in the group will remain completely confidential.

The session is interactive, although there is no pressure to actively contribute if you feel uncomfortable about speaking. There will be opportunities for you to ask questions, or if you prefer, you will be able to speak on an individual basis to the team afterwards. We will provide you with an information pack containing information sheets and advice and the contact details of the unit.

Your follow-up sessions (steps 2-4) will be individual appointments where we can tailor your therapy to suit your needs.

What if I don't feel comfortable joining a group session?

We aim to deliver a high quality service in the group setting whilst being sensitive to the needs of our patients. We appreciate that bowel problems are embarrassing and if you do not feel you would be able to attend the group education session we will be able to make you an individual appointment with our nurses, however the waiting time for these may be significantly longer.

Please complete the questionnaires enclosed as these will help us tailor your journey through the pathway.

Accessing your BRaCE online group session

During the pandemic we have been increasing the number of video appointments we hold online to help keep our patients as safe as possible.

A video appointment is where you speak to a healthcare professional using the video camera in your smartphone, tablet or computer in the comfort of your own home. We know that for some people this may sound daunting, particularly if you aren't used to using modern technology, but we hope that the instructions we have included with this letter will help make the process much easier for you.

What is Microsoft Teams?

Your BRaCE online video appointment will be held on Microsoft Teams. This is a secure programme that allows us to hold group video meetings. We will contact you directly via

Patient information factsheet

your chosen email address and send you a link to join the appointment (you do not need to download any software).

What will I need for my video appointment?

You will need:

- a smartphone, tablet or computer that allows video calling (you will have the option to have your camera turned on or off)
- a good internet connection
- a well-lit, quiet and private space

Your microphone will need to be muted during your appointment, but you can ask general questions by turning on your mic at any time or via the chat function. This will be explained at the beginning of the appointment.

Contact us

If you have any further questions after reading this factsheet, or would like to discuss your online BRaCE video appointment, please contact the department on **023 8120 4132**.

Useful links

Bladder and bowel foundation

Helpline: **0845 345 0165**

www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

**The G.I Physiology Unit
C Level
North Wing
Southampton General Hospital
SO16 6YD**

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**