

# Departments and Other Places in the Hospital

## Section 1: Departments

Hospitals vary widely in the services they offer and therefore, in the departments they have. Below is a list of the main departments you'll come across when you visit a hospital. They are staffed by a wide variety of healthcare professionals, with some crossover between departments. Each department tends to be overseen by consultants in that specialty with a team of junior medical staff under them who are also interested in that specialty.



### Admissions

At the **Admitting Department**, the patient will be required to provide personal information and sign consent forms before being taken to the hospital unit or ward. If the individual is critically ill, then, this information is usually obtained from a family member.

### Accident and emergency (A&E)

This department (sometimes called Casualty) is where you're likely to be taken if you've called an ambulance in an emergency. These departments operate 24 hours a day.

## **Anaesthetics**

Doctors in this department give anaesthetic for operations. They are responsible for the provision of:

- acute pain services (pain relief after an operation)
- chronic pain services (pain relief in long-term conditions such as arthritis)
- critical care services (pain relief for those who have had a serious accident or trauma)
- obstetric anaesthesia and analgesia (epidurals in childbirth and anaesthetic for Caesarean sections).

## **Breast screening**

This unit screens women for breast cancer, either through routine mammogram examinations or at the request of doctors. It's usually linked to an X-ray department.

## **Burn Center (Burn Unit or Burns Unit)**

A hospital specializing in the treatment of burns. Burn centres are often used for the treatment and recovery of patients with more severe burns.

## **Cardiology**

This department provides medical care to patients who have problems with their heart or circulation. It treats people on an inpatient and outpatient basis.

Typical procedures performed include:

- electrocardiogram (ECG) and exercise tests to measure heart function
- echocardiograms (ultrasound scan of the heart)
- scans of the carotid artery in your neck to determine stroke risk
- 24-hour blood pressure tests
- insertion of pacemakers
- cardiac catheterisation (coronary angiography) to see if there are any blocks in your arteries.

**Coronary Care Unit (CCU): (Cardiac intensive care unit (CICU)** - A hospital ward specialized in the care of patients with heart attacks, unstable angina, cardiac dysrhythmia and other cardiac conditions that require continuous monitoring and treatment

## **Critical care**

Sometimes called intensive care, this unit is for the most seriously ill patients. It has a relatively small number of beds and is manned by specialist doctors and nurses, as well as by consultant anaesthetists, physiotherapists and dietitians. Patients requiring intensive care are often transferred from other hospitals or other departments in the same hospital.

## **Diagnostic imaging**

Formerly known as X-ray, this department provides a full range of diagnostic imaging services including:

- general radiography (X-ray scans)
- scans for A&E
- mammography (breast scans)
- ultrasound scans
- angiography (X-ray of blood vessels)
- interventional radiology (minimally invasive procedures, eg to treat narrowed arteries)
- CT scanning (scans that show cross-sections of the body)
- MRI scanning (3D scans using magnetic and radio waves).

## **Ear nose and throat (ENT)**

The ENT department provides care for patients with a variety of problems, including:

- general ear, nose and throat diseases
- cancers of the head and neck area
- tear duct problems
- balance and hearing disorders
- snoring and sleep apnoea
- ENT allergy problems
- voice disorders.

## **Elderly services department**

Led by consultant physicians specialising in geriatric medicine, this department looks after a wide range of problems associated with the elderly. This includes:

- stroke medicine
- diabetes
- locomotor (movement) problems
- continence problems
- syncope (fainting)
- bone disease.

It provides a range of services such as home visits, day hospitals and outpatient clinics. The department often has close links with other community services for the elderly.

### **Gastroenterology**

Run by consultants specialising in bowel-related medicine, this department investigates and treats upper and lower gastrointestinal disease, as well as diseases of the pancreas and bile duct system. It treats scheduled and emergency gastrointestinal conditions. Diagnostic and interventional endoscopic procedures are performed. Sub-specialities include colorectal surgery, inflammatory bowel disease and swallowing problems.

There are often endoscopy nurse specialists linked to a gastroenterology unit who can perform a wide range of bowel investigations.

### **General surgery**

The general surgery ward covers a wide range of surgery and typically includes the following:

- Day surgery
- Thyroid surgery
- Kidney transplants
- Colon surgery
- Laparoscopic cholecystectomy (gallbladder removal)
- Endoscopy
- Breast surgery

Day surgery units have a high turnover of patients who attend for minor surgical procedures such as hernia repairs.

### **Gynaecology**

These departments investigate and treat problems of the female urinary tract and reproductive organs. They also provide a range of care for cervical smear screening and post-menopausal bleeding checks.

### **Haematology**

Haematology services work closely with the hospital laboratory. These doctors treat blood diseases and malignancies linked to the blood.

### **Infection Control**

Primarily responsible for conducting surveillance of hospital-acquired infections and investigating and controlling outbreaks of infection clusters among patients and health care personnel. The department calculates rates of hospital-acquired infections, collates antibiotic susceptibility data, performs analysis of aggregated infection data and provides comparative data to national benchmarks over time.

### **Intensive Care Unit (ICU)**

A special department of a hospital or health care facility that provides intensive treatment medicine and caters to patients with severe and life-threatening illnesses and injuries, which require constant, close monitoring and support from specialist equipment and medications.

### **Maternity departments**

Maternity wards provide antenatal care, care during childbirth and postnatal support.

### **Microbiology**

The microbiology department looks at all aspects of microbiology, such as bacterial and viral infections.

### **Molecular Genetics Laboratory**

The Molecular Genetics Laboratory offers DNA analysis for diagnosis and carrier testing for metabolic and other genetic disorders. Comprehensive interpretation is provided by highly experienced and certified geneticists and genetic counsellors. The laboratories are dedicated to developing new tests and implementing advances in methodologies. The interdisciplinary group includes laboratory scientists, clinicians and a genetic counsellor, and has a mission to provide the highest quality of tests for the diagnosis and care of patients with genetic conditions.

### **Neonatal unit**

Neonatal units have several cots that are used for intensive, high-dependency and special care for newborn babies.

### **Nephrology**

This department monitors and assesses patients with kidney (renal) problems. They also supervise the dialysis day unit for people who are waiting for a kidney transplant or who are unable to have a transplant for any reason.

### **Neurology**

This unit deals with disorders of the nervous system, including the brain and spinal cord.

### **Nutrition and dietetics**

Trained dieticians and nutritionists provide specialist advice on diet for hospital wards and outpatient clinics. They also provide group education to patients with diabetes, heart disease and osteoarthritis, and work closely with weight management groups.

### **Obstetrics**

This unit provides maternity services such as:

- antenatal and postnatal care
- prenatal diagnosis unit
- maternal and foetal surveillance.

Overseen by consultant obstetricians and gynaecologists, there is a wide range of attached staff linked to them, including specialist nurses, midwives and imaging technicians.

### **Occupational therapy**

This department helps people who are physically or mentally impaired, including temporary disability after medical treatment.

### **Oncology**

This department provides radiotherapy and a full range of chemotherapy treatments for cancerous tumours and blood disorders.

### **Ophthalmology**

Eye departments provide a range of ophthalmic services for adults and children, including:

- general eye clinic appointments
- laser treatments
- optometry (sight testing)

### **Orthopaedics**

Orthopaedic departments treat problems that affect your musculoskeletal system. That's muscles, joints, bones, ligaments, tendons and nerves. The doctors and nurses who run this department deal with everything from setting bone fractures to carrying out surgery to correct problems such as torn ligaments and hip replacements.

### **Pain management clinics**

Usually run by consultant anaesthetists, these clinics aim to help treat patients with severe long-term pain that appears resistant to normal treatments. Depending on the hospital, a wide range of options is available, such as acupuncture, and drug treatment.

### **Physiotherapy**

Physiotherapists promote body healing, for example after surgery, through therapies such as exercise and manipulation. Their services are provided to patients on the wards, in the physiotherapy department itself and rehabilitation units.

### **Radiotherapy**

This department provides radiotherapy (X-ray) treatment for conditions such as malignant tumours and cancer.

### **Renal unit**

Closely linked with nephrology teams at hospitals, these units provide haemodialysis treatment for patients with kidney failure. Many of these patients are on waiting lists for a kidney transplant.

### **Rheumatology**

Specialist doctors called rheumatologists run the unit and are experts in the field of musculoskeletal disorders (bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles and nerves). Their role is to diagnose conditions and recommend appropriate treatment, if necessary, from the orthopaedic department.

### **Sexual health (genitourinary medicine)**

This department provides a free and confidential service offering:

- advice, testing and treatment for all sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- family planning care (including emergency contraception and free condoms)
- pregnancy testing and advice.
- It also provides care and support for other sexual and genital problems.

Social Work: Clinical social workers help patients and their families deal with a broad range of psychosocial issues and stresses related to coping with illness and maintaining health. Social workers, resource specialists and advocates form a network that addresses the challenges families face, increases access to health care and other human services, and serves as a bridge between the hospital setting and a patient's family life, home and community.

### **Urology**

It investigates all areas linked to kidney and bladder-based problems.