



Non-organ specific infectious disease: Virtual Acute Care Unit (VACU)

This leaflet is for patients going home after treatment for an infection where no single source has been confirmed. VACU will provide short-term monitoring and follow-up to support your recovery.

VACU telephone: 0118 322 5201 (8am-8pm, Mon-Sun)
VACU email rbb-tr.vhs@nhs.net
Out of hours: 111 or 999



What is the Virtual Acute Care Unit?

- VACU is a hospital service that helps you recover safely at home, after an illness or flare-up, while still having access to hospital support if you need it. This may reduce the chance of complications or needing to return to hospital
- Your clinician says you are well enough to leave hospital safely, but that you need short-term follow-up from the healthcare team.
- The follow-up you receive will depend on your condition and how you are recovering. Some patients may have individual needs for daily hospital treatment or monitoring at first
- You will receive regular telephone calls with a clinician and will need to return to our unit for blood tests until your levels are satisfactory. If you do become more unwell, the VACU team will ensure you receive appropriate and timely treatment.

What is non-organ specific (NoS) infectious disease?

You have signs or symptoms of infection – such as fever, fatigue, or raised inflammation markers in the blood – but the exact source of infection has not yet been identified.

What will happen after I go home?

Once you return home, a member of the VACU team may call to:

- Check for any new or worsening symptoms.
- Review any side effects from your antibiotics or other treatments.
- Update you with any new test or culture results.
- Arrange for blood tests or face-to-face reviews if needed.
- Discuss your case with the hospital microbiology team and other specialists if required

***Please be aware, our call to you may come from a withheld or unknown number.**

Your medications

- If you were given any medications, please read the patient information leaflet in the packet, which will explain possible side effects to look out for.
- It is important that you take your medications exactly as prescribed for effective treatment.
- If you are struggling with keeping anything down because you feel nauseous, let us know so we can prescribe anti-sickness medication or find an alternative medication.
- If you were given antibiotics, it is important you complete the full course, even if you start feeling better.

Alarm signs and what to do next

Seek help via our Virtual Acute Care Unit number, 111 or 999 if you develop ANY of the following:

- Fever above 39°C or shivering/chills that do not settle.
- Feeling increasingly weak, dizzy, or confused.
- Rapid heartbeat, chest pain, or difficulty breathing.
- Persistent vomiting or not being able to keep fluids down.
- New pain, swelling, or redness in a specific area.
- Severe headache, neck stiffness, or new rash.
- Low blood pressure (systolic less than 100 mmHg) or feeling faint.

**If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to call our Virtual Acute Care Unit number – we are happy to help as we know this can be very stressful and scary.
0118 322 5201**

Are you a carer?

Carers give unpaid care to a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust is committed to recognising their valuable role. If you would like any additional support or information please speak to our team or visit our Carers Support webpage. www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/accessible-information-and-reasonable-adjustments/carers-support

Instructions for using the equipment

The VACU team may give you some equipment to use at home. This may include a pulse oximeter, a blood pressure monitor and a temperature probe.

- The clinician looking after you will let you know what readings they need, and how often. You can write these down, and let us know when we phone you.

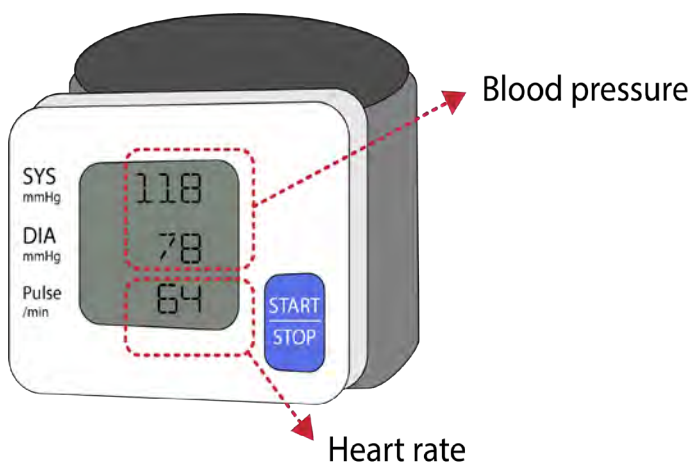
Instructions for using your pulse oximeter at home

- Make sure your fingers are warm.
- Remove any nail varnish before attaching the probe.
- Clip the oximeter onto your finger.
- Sit up straight and rest for a few minutes before taking measurements.
- After 5-10 seconds, the probe will give you two different numbers - an oxygen saturation level (abbreviated to SpO₂) and a pulse rate (abbreviated to PR or BPM) - we are interested in both readings.

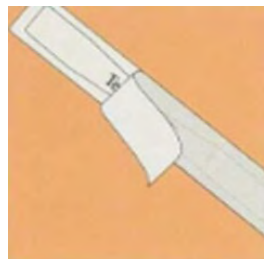


Using your blood pressure monitor at home

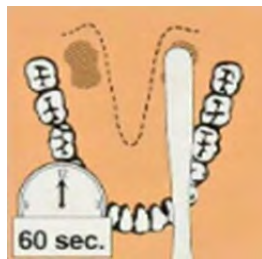
- Ensure you are seated comfortably and rest for a few minutes before taking the readings.
- Attach the cuff to your upper arm, against your skin (and not over clothing).
- Press the START/STOP button to start measuring your blood pressure – the cuff will pump up, which may feel a bit uncomfortable for a short period.
- The monitor will give you three readings.
- The top two readings are your blood pressure.
- The bottom number is your heart rate.
- You can view the full instruction manual by searching online for “Omron RS1 manual”.



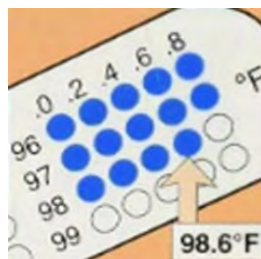
Using your temperature probe



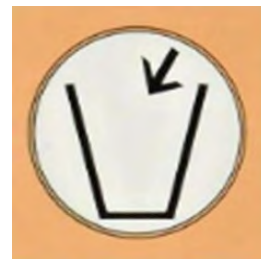
1. Remove thermometer from wrapper.



2. Place under tongue as far back as possible. Close your mouth for 60 seconds.



3. Remove. Wait approximately 10 seconds. Some blue dots may disappear as device "locks in" for accuracy. Read temperature indicated by last blue dot.



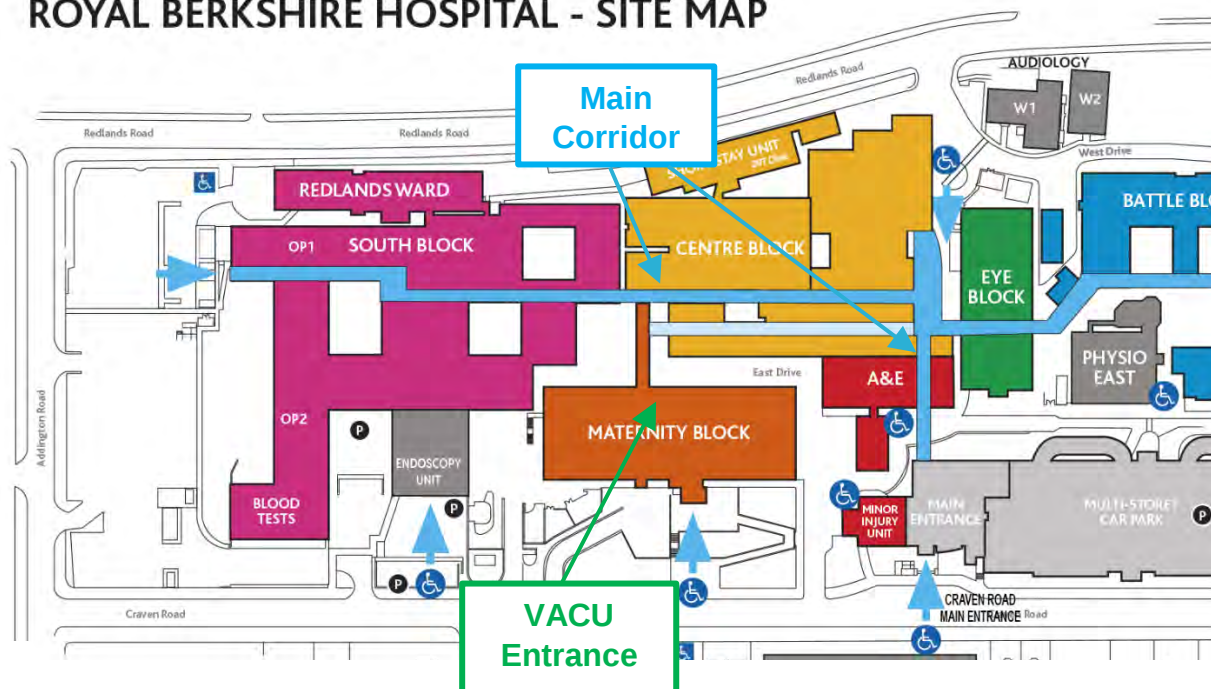
4. Record temperature and discard thermometer.

Returning the devices

Once you have recovered, please return any devices VACU has provided to the drop-off box located in the Virtual Acute Care Unit in **Maternity Block, level 2** – see map below.

Open Mon-Sun, 8am-8pm. **Please do not return them to the Emergency Department (A&E).**

ROYAL BERKSHIRE HOSPITAL - SITE MAP



To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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

RBFT Virtual Acute Care Unit, June 2026

Next review due: June 2028