



Acute pyelonephritis: Virtual Acute Care Unit

If you have been discharged home after treatment for acute pyelonephritis (a serious kidney infection) and require ongoing monitoring by the Virtual Acute Care Unit (VACU), please read this leaflet.

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 pyelonephritis?

Pyelonephritis is a bacterial infection of one or both kidneys. It is usually caused by bacteria that travel up from the bladder. Symptoms often include:

- Fever/chills
- Flank or back pain,
- Nausea/vomiting
- Feeling generally unwell.

Treatment usually involves antibiotics, pain relief, and monitoring to ensure the infection is improving. In most cases, this will include a short course of injected antibiotics before switching to taking them by mouth.

What will happen after I go home?

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

- Arrange blood and urine tests, and any required face-to-face review, including any need to inject antibiotics.

- Check for any new or worsening symptoms.
- Review any side effects from your antibiotics.
- Let you know any new test or culture results.

***Please note that our call to you may come from a withheld or unknown number.**

Your medications

- Please read the patient information leaflet from your antibiotics packet, which will explain possible side effects to look out for.
- For effective treatment, you must take your medications exactly as prescribed.
- If you are struggling with keeping anything down because you feel nauseous, let us know and we can prescribe anti-sickness medication or find an alternative medication.
- Even if you start to feel better, you should still finish your course of antibiotics.

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:

- Worsening fever or shaking chills
- Worsening flank or back pain
- New vomiting or inability to keep medication down
- Increasing confusion, dizziness, or feeling very faint
- Reduced urine output
- New/worsening blood in the urine
- Rapid heart rate (higher than 120) or very low blood pressure
- Feeling suddenly more unwell at any point
- No improvement after 48-72 hours of antibiotics

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.

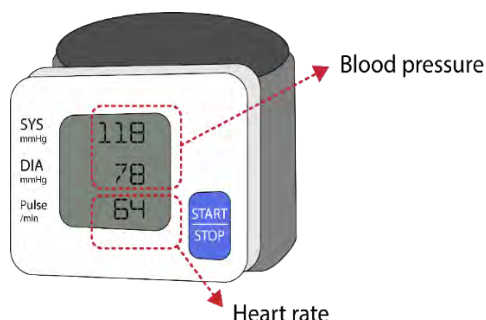
Instructions for using your pulse oximeter at home

1. Make sure your fingers are warm.
2. Remove any nail varnish before attaching the probe.
3. Clip the oximeter onto your finger.
4. Sit up straight and rest for a few minutes before taking measurements.
5. 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.

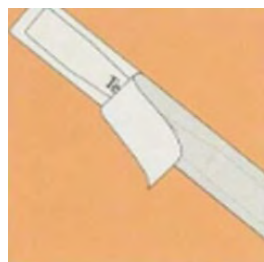


Using your blood pressure monitor at home

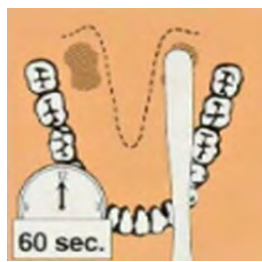
1. Ensure you are seated comfortably and rest for a few minutes before taking the readings.
2. Attach the cuff to your upper arm, against your skin (and not over clothing).
3. Press the START/STOP button to start measuring your blood pressure – the cuff will pump up, which may feel a bit uncomfortable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



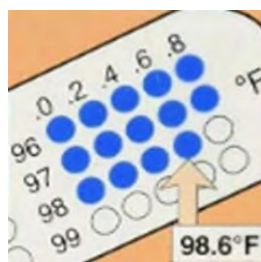
Using your temperature probe



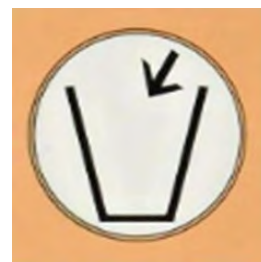
1. Remove thermometer from wrapper.



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.



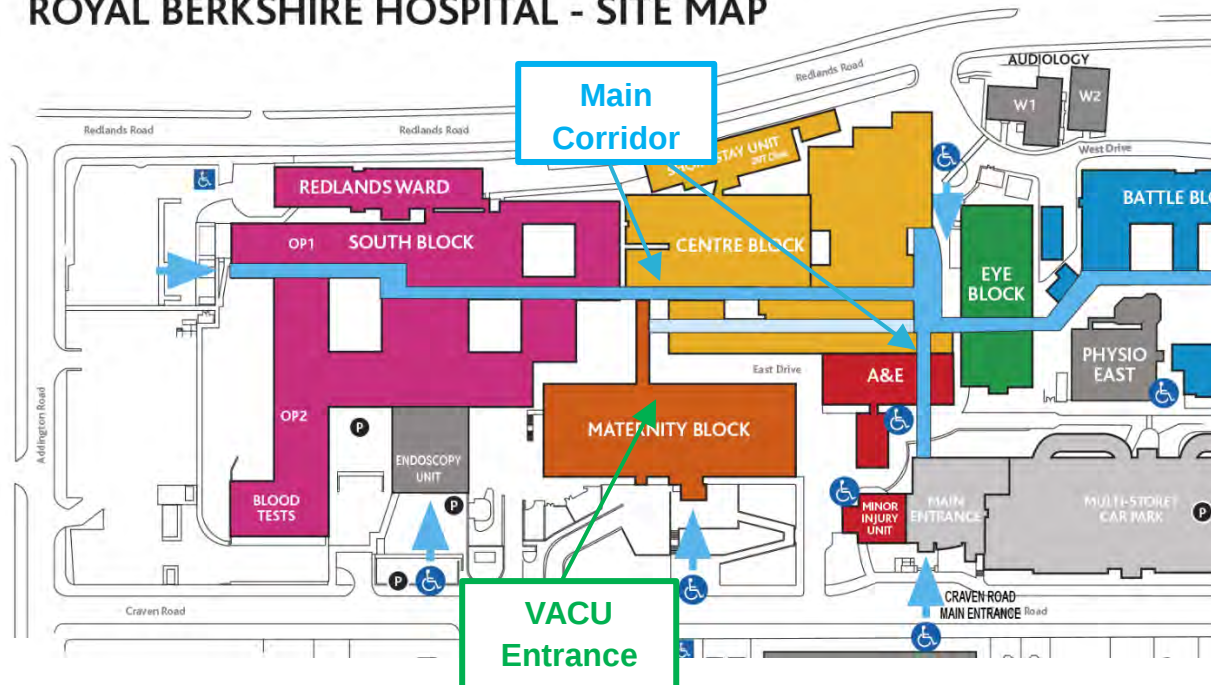
4. Record temperature and discard thermometer.

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.