



## Acute kidney injury (AKI): Virtual Acute Care Unit

This leaflet explains how the Virtual Acute Care Unit (VACU) will support you after your diagnosis of acute kidney injury (AKI). Our team combines home monitoring with hospital visits when needed, so you receive safe care in the right place at the right time.

**VACU telephone: 0118 322 5201 (8am-8pm, Mon-Sun)**

**VACU email [rbb-tr.vhs@nhs.net](mailto:rbb-tr.vhs@nhs.net)**

**Out of hours: 111 or 999**



Virtual Hospital

### 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 acute kidney injury?

AKI means your kidneys are not working as well as usual. This can happen suddenly due to illness, infection, dehydration, medicines, or other causes. When the kidneys slow down, waste products and extra fluid can build up in your body. Most people recover well once the underlying cause is treated, but your kidneys may need close monitoring for a while.

Common symptoms or signs include:

- Passing much less urine than usual
- Swelling in legs, ankles, feet, or face (due to fluid build-up)
- Feeling unusually tired or weak
- Feeling sick or vomiting
- Shortness of breath (in severe cases, due to fluid build-up in the lungs)

### What will happen after I go home?

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

- Review your symptoms (by phone or in person, depending on your needs).

- Check your readings such as blood pressure, heart rate, oxygen levels, and weight. We can provide any equipment you need for this and instructions are below.
- Arrange blood tests when needed to monitor your kidney function and response to treatment.

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

## Your medications

- Some medicines may be temporarily stopped while your kidneys recover (such as certain painkillers or blood pressure tablets).
- You may be advised on how much fluid to drink or limit, as this may be important during your recovery.

## Alarm signs and what to do next

**Seek help via our VACU number (0118 322 5201 8am-8pm Monday-Sunday)**

- Severe sickness, vomiting, or can't keep fluids down
- No urine for 12 hours or much less urine than usual
- Sudden or worsening swelling (e.g., in legs, face, or body)
- New/worsening breathlessness
- New or worsening confusion
- New chest pain, fainting, or a very low blood pressure
- Any other worrying or rapidly worsening symptoms

**Out of hours: Call 111 for non-emergency concerns or 999 for life-threatening emergencies (e.g., severe chest pain, fainting, or severe breathlessness).**

**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](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/accessible-information-and-reasonable-adjustments/carers-support)

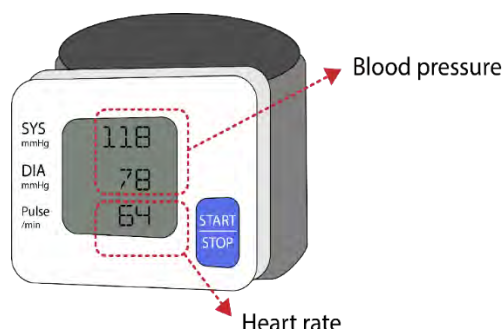
## Instructions for using the equipment

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.

## 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”.

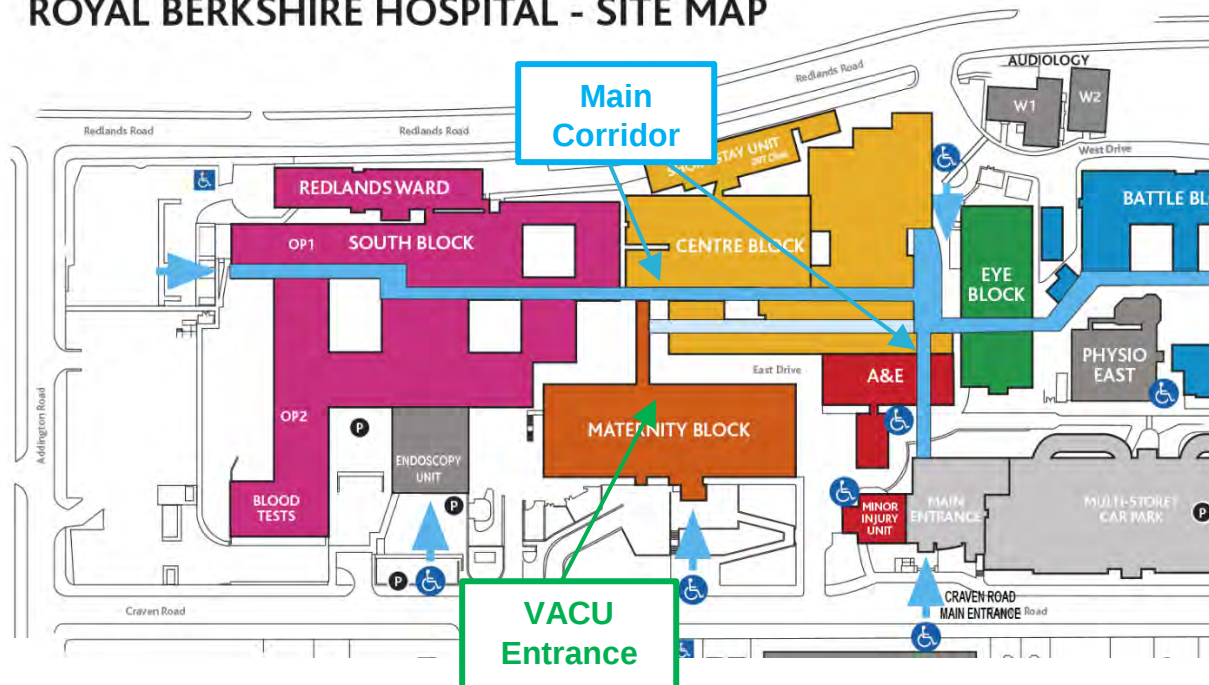


## Returning the devices

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](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

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



Royal Berkshire  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Acute kidney injury (AKI) digital support hub

Improve your understanding of AKI and learn more about the route to recovery using this interactive information hub.

Available in multiple languages on mobile and web.

English   Polskie   ਪੰਜਾਬੀ   नेपाली   اردو



To access the hub, scan the QR code  
or visit [www.healthinote.com/aki](http://www.healthinote.com/aki)

## On the hub, you'll find...

- reliable information on diagnosis, treatment, recovery and more
- material developed with kidney doctors and specialists to support your understanding
- links to further support



Developed January 2023. Review due: January 2025

## What is acute kidney injury?

- Acute kidney injury (AKI) is sudden damage to the kidneys, meaning they stop working as well as they did before
- The kidneys remove waste and harmful chemicals from the blood, and help control the level of water, salt and other substances in the body
- If the kidneys are damaged, other organs can be damaged as a result, so it is important that AKI is treated straight away

## Causes of AKI

AKI can have many different causes, but it is not the result of a physical injury or accident. Common causes of AKI can include:



Infection



Blockage



Low blood pressure



Reaction to medicine



Dehydration

## Recovery and treatment

Once the cause of AKI has been discovered and treated, most people make a full recovery. In some cases, you might need further tests and monitoring. After an AKI, you should:

- get lots of rest
- drink plenty of water (unless you've been told not to)
- avoid alcohol and smoking
- speak to your healthcare team if you have any concerns

Use the digital support hub to find out more about AKI, including causes, diagnosis and treatments, and for further support.

This hub is intended to provide information only. For specific questions about your treatment, please speak to your care team.