



Virtual Acute Care Unit

This leaflet is for patients who are discharged home following a diagnosis which requires further home monitoring. It explains how you can monitor yourself at home to make sure your body's oxygen levels, heart rate, body temperature and blood pressure remain safe.

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

Out of hours: 111 or 999



What is the Virtual Acute Care Unit?

Our Innovative Virtual Ward pathways provide patients with hospital care in the comfort of their own home. This enables patients to safely avoid hospital admission or get home sooner to complete treatment or recuperate.

At home, patients are carefully monitored remotely by the Virtual Ward team using state-of-art medical equipment and regular video or telephone calls with clinicians. Patients can also call the team directly if they have any concerns or questions.

The purpose of the Virtual Acute Care Unit is to enable you to return home sooner but still receive hospital care, by remotely monitoring your symptoms and response to ongoing treatment. Your clinician has determined that you are safe to go home with monitoring by the Virtual Acute Care Unit (VACU) team. Monitoring may be needed until you are discharged from us. If so you may be given equipment, such as a pulse oximeter, temperature probe, and a blood pressure monitor, to check your readings, so we can make sure that you are improving. If you do become more unwell, the VACU team will ensure you receive appropriate and timely treatment. You may also be asked to come in to our unit for a review, blood tests and/ or Intravenous medication.

What will happen after I go home?

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

- Check your symptoms and to check for any side effects of your treatment, until we determine you are getting better.
- Ask you to give us your readings from your monitor.
- Arrange an appointment slot for regular blood tests to monitor your infection markers.
- Update you with the results of your blood tests.
- If you have not heard from us by 1pm on the first day after arriving home, call the Virtual Acute Care Unit number (0118 322 5201) 8am-8pm Monday-Sunday. You can also call this number if you have any questions or concerns.

Virtual appointments

- Our team will phone you every day until we determine you are getting better.
- We will ask about your symptoms and ask you to give us your readings
- If you have not heard from us by 1 pm on the first day after you were sent home from hospital, call our virtual ward phone number (at the top of the first page)

Alarm signs and what to do next

Seek help via our VACU number, 111 or 999 in the following cases:

- If your oxygen saturations are **persistently 94% or less**.
- If the top number of your blood pressure is **persistently less than 100**.
- If your heart rate at rest is **persistently greater than 110**.
- If your temperature is **persistently greater than 38 degrees and not coming down with paracetamol**.
- If you have **diarrhoea** and / or **vomiting**.
- If you are **more short of breath**.
- If you develop **worsening chest pain**.

During working hours, you can also call our VACU number if you are not sure.

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

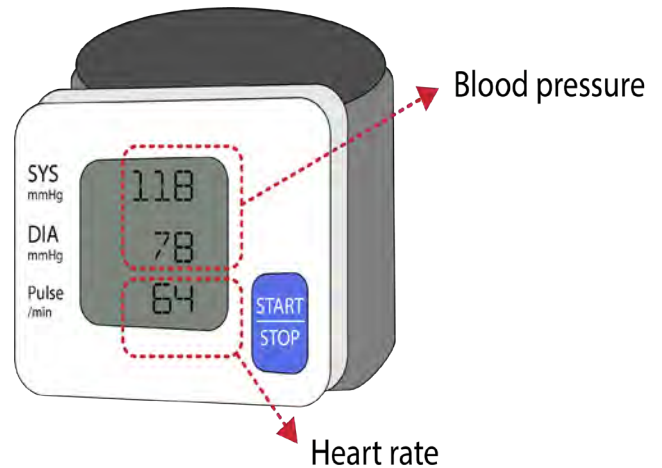
Instructions for using your pulse oximeter at home

- 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

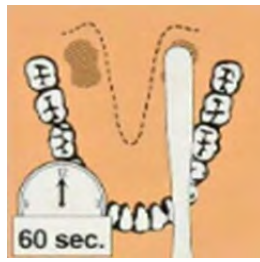
- Ensure you are seated comfortably and rest for a few minutes before taking the readings.
- Attach the cuff to your upper arm, against your skin (and not over clothing).
- Press the START/STOP button to start measuring your blood pressure – the cuff will pump up, which may feel a bit uncomfortable for 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”.



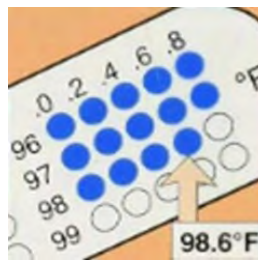
Using your temperature probe



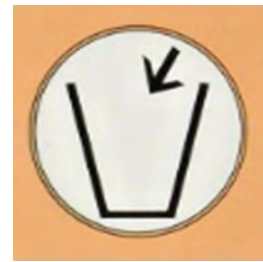
1. Remove thermometer from wrapper.



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.

Recording your oxygen levels, heart rate, temperature, and blood pressure

Using the table below, record your oxygen levels, heart rate, blood pressure and temperature four times a day:

DATE								
Morning	Oxygen							
	Heart rate							
	Blood pressure							
	Temperature							
Midday	Oxygen							
	Heart rate							
	Blood pressure							
	Temperature							
Afternoon	Oxygen							
	Heart rate							
	Blood pressure							
	Temperature							
Evening	Oxygen							
	Heart rate							
	Blood pressure							
	Temperature							

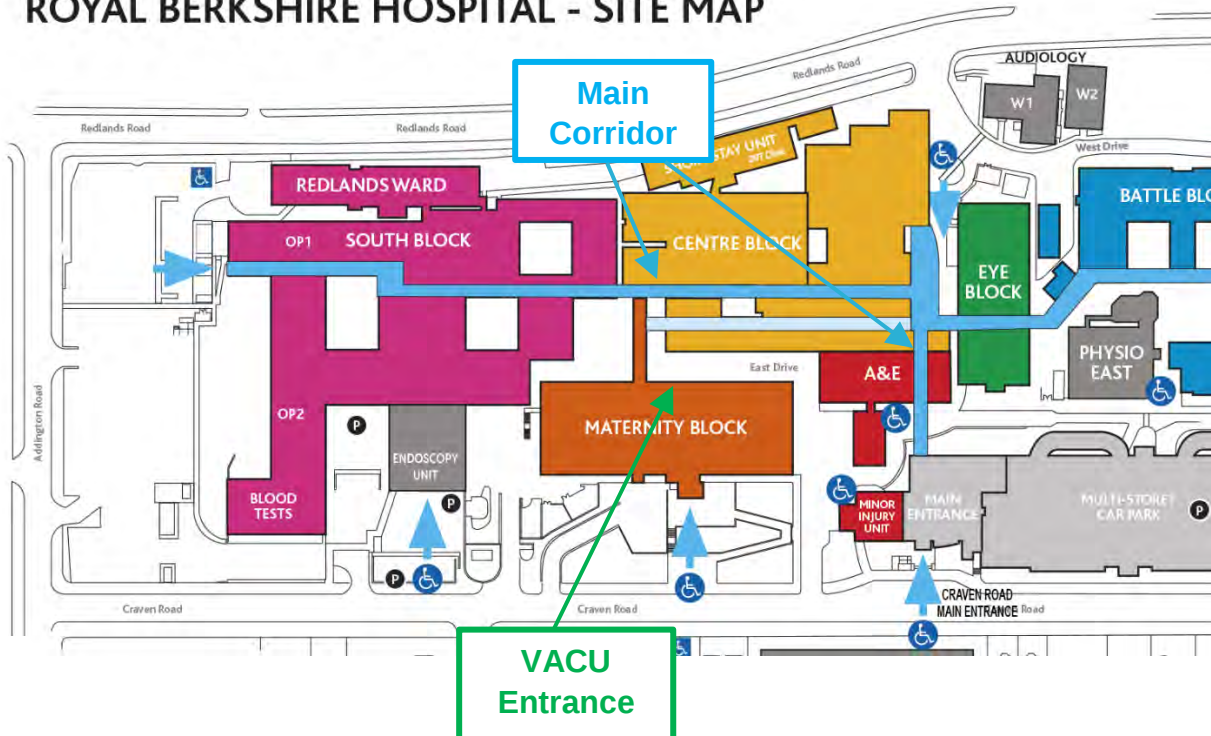
Your medications

- It is important that you 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 some anti-sickness medications.

Returning the devices

Once you have recovered, please return all the devices to the drop-off box located in the Virtual Acute Care Unit (VACU) 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

Reviewed: April 2025. Next review due: April 2027.