Swallow these with not more than half a cup of water. You are allowed to clean your teeth.

It is important that you arrive on time so that all the necessary admission documentation can be completed. A prompt arrival will also ensure that the surgeon and the anaesthetist can see you prior to your surgery and answer any questions you may have.

**Your anaesthetic**

Most patients do not require a general anaesthetic for operations on the hand or forearm. A local anaesthetic or regional anaesthetic may be more suitable for you. This means that although you are awake for the operation, you will not see the procedure due to a screen, nor feel pain due to a numbing injection placed just above your collarbone, in your armpit or somewhere further down your arm.

A local or regional anaesthetic avoids the risks of a general anaesthetic, which include a sore throat, feeling nauseated or actually vomiting or breathing problems and a few serious but rare complications. The recovery on the day is also quicker. However there are small risks with a local anaesthetic that can occur very occasionally including bruising, nerve damage (usually temporary) and reaction to the anaesthetic.

Before your operation, your anaesthetist or their assistant will discuss the method of how you, your arm or your hand will be ‘asleep’ for your procedure. You can have any queries answered at that time.

**Contact numbers**

If you have any concerns, please ring the hand co-ordinator on 0121 371 6169. This service is currently available Monday to Friday between (10:00-18:00) and Sundays (10:00-16:00).

Outside these hours, please ring the Emergency Department (ED) on 0121 627 2000 and ask for the nurses’ desk in the ED.

If you are running late please contact the Ambulatory Care Ward on 0121 371 3128.

Please feel free to ask anything, no matter how silly you may think the question, we are all here to help you.

**Admission details**

Date: ________________________________

Time: ________________________________

Nil by mouth from: ________________________________

Home approximately: ________________________________
Welcome to Queen Elizabeth Hospital’s hand surgery services

This unit is the regional centre of expertise for hand surgery. Patients are referred to this hospital from many other hospitals in the West Midlands area.

We usually arrange for you to have your operation without having to stay in hospital overnight. If you have an open wound this is normally within 2-4 days from the initial injury, or within 7-10 days for a fracture or ligament injury. However, sometimes your surgery may be postponed at very short notice for another patient requiring more urgent surgery.

The service is staffed by a surgical team of doctors, ward and operating theatre nursing staff, hand therapists and the duty hand surgery co-ordinator. The hand co-ordinator is a senior nurse who organises patients requiring emergency hand surgery at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham (QEHB) and is probably the first person you will speak to following your visit to the Emergency Department (ED) or the Hand ‘hot’ Clinic.

You have been seen in ED or hot clinic by a doctor in trauma or plastic surgery. They will have assessed your wound and have decided that you can wait at home until your operation.

If you are given medication (such as painkillers or antibiotics) it is very important that you take these medications according to the instructions.

Before your operation

While you are waiting at home the hand co-ordinator will phone you, normally within a day or two, to inform you of when to expect your operation and to ensure you have no specific problems.

Please contact the hand co-ordinator if we have not been in contact within 2 days of your attendance at QEHB.

You may eat and drink normally until you are told to starve from a specific time. Sometimes there is unexpected spare time in theatre and you may be asked if you are able to come for your operation at short notice.

Your bandage should be kept clean and dry.

To reduce swelling and pain you should keep your hand raised to the level of your heart, or preferably to the level of your shoulder, as much as possible. At night, you should raise your arm on a pillow/cushion.

You should contact the hand co-ordinator or the Emergency Department at QEHB if:

- You have any bleeding which does not stop. To try and stop bleeding please do the following:
  1. Raise your hand above your head.
  2. Press firmly on the area that is bleeding with your other hand for 5 minutes (Do this by the clock, no dabbing or peeping to see if it has stopped just constant, firm pressure).
- Your fingers appear dusky or cool
- Your fingers have pins and needles that start after you have gone home
- You have a bandage or plaster cast that feels too tight due to further swelling
- You cannot sleep due to increasing pain, even though you have taken pain-killers
- Your bandage becomes loose, floppy or wet
- You have a smelly discharge from your wound

Day of your operation

When your surgery has been arranged, the hand co-ordinator will telephone you and ask you to come to the hospital, usually this will be for the following day. You will normally be asked to attend the Ambulatory Care ward by 07:30 for a morning operation, or 12:00 for an afternoon operation.

You will be asked to be ‘nil by mouth’ from midnight for a morning operation or 06:00 for an afternoon operation. The fasting period is for your safety.

‘Nil by mouth’ means nothing to eat or to drink, including water, sweets and chewing gum. The only exception to this rule is that you should continue to take medication that you normally take and antibiotics that you have been given.