Elective surgery during COVID-19 pandemic
Information for patients

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that can cause illnesses ranging from a mild common cold to severe disease. COVID-19 is a new coronavirus identified in December 2019 and has been declared a Pandemic by the World Health Organisation.

Coronavirus infections are increasing in our community and WA Health has scaled back elective surgery to enable health services to best prepare. Reducing elective surgery will increase hospital capacity and allow health services to prepare for the pandemic by training and redeploying staff. It will also preserve our personal and protective equipment (PPE), which is essential to protect staff from infection, and minimise risk to patients.

Effective from 23 March 2020, WA Health hospitals are:
• Continuing with Category 1 elective surgeries
• Reviewing all Category 2 elective surgeries. Those deemed urgent will proceed. Those not considered urgent will be deferred.
• Deferring all Category 3 elective surgeries.

Hospitals will be contacting patients and referrers regarding any changes. To assist with this process we ask that you avoid contacting the hospital directly, unless you have been requested to do so.

We sincerely apologise for any distress this causes. As the COVID-19 pandemic passes and hospitals are able to return to a business as usual environment, we will commence booking deferred patients once again and will make contact with you.

If your symptoms worsen during this time, you should contact your GP.

For those patients awaiting booked elective surgery, you should:
• Follow the procedures and advice given to you by the hospital, including information on how to stay as fit and well as possible for surgery
• Advise the hospital of your acceptance of a proposed admission date when provided
• Participate in any pre-admission clinics arranged for you
• Attend the hospital on the confirmed admission date
• Participate in any follow-up appointments after your operation as advised.
• Contact the hospital via the details provided in your hospital correspondence if any of the following apply:
  o You meet the COVID-19 criteria for the 14-day self-isolation and this may impact your attendance at any scheduled appointments or admission for surgery or follow up appointments.
- Your contact details change, such as a change of address or phone number
- You no longer wish to have the surgery
- Any medical or personal circumstances change that may lead to the need to cancel or defer your surgery
- You are on another public hospital waiting list for a different elective surgery procedure.
- Keep your regular appointments with your GP while waiting for your surgery. If you feel that your condition has changed or become worse since being placed on a waitlist for elective surgery, you should discuss this with your GP.

Last updated 31 March 2020

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

© Department of Health 2020

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.

health.wa.gov.au