

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: Elective Surgery

Q: *Why was my surgery postponed?*

A: Newton-Wellesley delayed elective surgeries to conserve resources for COVID-19 care and ensure the safety of our patients and all those at the hospital. Though the name implies that “elective” means the surgery is by choice, that is not necessarily true. Elective surgeries refers to procedures planned in advance, as opposed to those required in urgent or emergent situations, which Newton-Wellesley has been performing throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Q: *Is it safe to have my surgery?*

A: Yes – your safety is our primary concern and we have taken several steps to ensure that you and our staff are safe before, during and after your procedure. As the number of acute COVID-19 cases declined, and a “flattening of the curve,” Newton-Wellesley started performing elective procedures. During the COVID-19 pandemic, surgeons continued to provide critical emergency surgical care to patients safely and effectively. Our experience with these patients allows us to make your scheduled surgery as safe and successful as possible.

Q: *What precautions are taken to make sure the facility is safe?*

A: You and your family can feel confident that we are taking necessary and important steps to keep you safe.

We screen to protect you, your families, and our staff

- We screen all employees daily for symptoms. Anyone with symptoms of a possible respiratory illness is not allowed to work until they are better.
- We screen visitors to our hospitals and physicians’ offices for symptoms. Any visitor with symptoms is restricted from entering our hospitals or physicians’ offices.

- We test and screen patients for COVID-19.
 - o Admitted patients to our hospitals are tested for COVID-19 prior to admission and then screened for symptoms each day of their hospital stay.
 - o Patients visiting our hospital campuses and physicians’ offices for clinic appointments are screened for symptoms prior to their visit and again upon arrival. If symptomatic, patients are cared for via virtual visits or in designated areas where we use personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus.
 - o For walk-in locations, we adhere to best practice safety protocols in those settings.
 - o When providing care in the home we screen patients for symptoms prior to the visit.

We clean our hands and spaces and make it easy for you to do the same

- We have increased the frequency and intensity of cleaning of all high-touch areas throughout our institutions.
- We require frequent hand-cleaning and have added hand sanitizer stations, so patients and staff can clean their hands easily and frequently.
- We follow special infection prevention guidelines for care provided in the home to protect our patients and our staff.

We protect everyone in our environment

- We require all people — employees, patients, and visitors — at our facilities to wear a mask.
- We have rearranged spaces to accommodate physical distancing and prevent transmission of infections by removing chairs from waiting rooms, and in some high-use areas, installing plexiglass barriers.

- We limit visitors coming into our hospitals and physicians' offices.
- We wear masks and follow social distancing guidelines when providing care in the home.

Q: *If I am having surgery, will I require screening and/or testing?*

A: Screening and/or testing of all patients having surgery will be required to make sure you have had no known exposure to COVID-19 and you have no symptoms consistent with the disease. Preoperative evaluation is necessary to make sure you do not have the virus, even though you may have no signs or symptoms.

Here is what to expect before, during and after your operating room visit at the main hospital:

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

- **Pre-registration:** You must pre-register by phone prior to your procedure.
- **Symptom Screening:** You will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms by phone three days before your surgery.
- **Swab Test:** Two days prior to surgery, you will receive a call from our scheduling team to schedule a COVID-19 swab test. If you unable to get tested in advance, you will receive a rapid test on the day of your surgery.
- **Screening & Test Results:** If you are symptomatic during screening or test positive for COVID-19, your procedure may have to be rescheduled.
- **Visitor Policy:** Visitors are not allowed in the pre-op or PACU areas.
- **Mask Policy:** All patients and providers are always required to wear a mask.

DURING YOUR VISIT

- **Checking In:** You will check in at the main registration desk. A nurse will escort you to the waiting area and then the pre-op area as quickly as possible.
- **Symptom Screening:** Upon arrival, you will be asked several questions about any COVID-19

symptoms you may be experiencing.

- **Waiting Room:** Waiting areas have been rearranged to ensure proper social distancing.
- **Building Entry:** Please use the East Lobby entrance. Follow our detailed, color-coded signage to help minimize foot traffic.
- **Staff Interaction:** Doctors and staff will wear PPE appropriate for your procedure – including masks, gloves and face shields – throughout the entirety of your visit.

AFTER YOUR VISIT

- **Admission:** If you are being admitted, you will be brought to your new unit after your recovery stay in the PACU (Post Anesthesia Care Unit).
- **Discharge:** If you are being discharged, you will receive discharge instructions and then be taken to the lobby entrance by wheelchair to meet the person picking you up. Visitors can wait in their cars, and hospital personnel will call them when you are ready for discharge. If you'd like the person picking you up to hear the discharge instructions, we can include them in a telephone conference.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Family members and friends can be updated on your progress via text message with your consent.

Q: *What can I expect if I am having surgery at the Outpatient Surgery Center (OSC) versus the main hospital?*

A: Please know that you can feel confident that your care will be of the same quality and safety you've come to know and expect from Newton-Wellesley Hospital.

Here is what to expect before, during and after your operating room visit at OSC:

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

- **Hours:** All hours will remain the same.
- **Pre-registration:** You must pre-register by phone prior to your procedure.
- **Symptom Screening:** You will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms by phone three days before your surgery.

- **Swab Test:** Two days prior to surgery, you will receive a call from our scheduling team to schedule a COVID-19 swab test.
- **Screening & Test Results:** If you are symptomatic during screening or test positive for COVID-19, you must reschedule your procedure.
- **Visitor Policy:** Visitors are not allowed in the pre-op or PACU areas.
- **Mask Policy:** All patients and providers are always required to wear a mask.

DURING YOUR VISIT

- **Checking In:** Please call 617-219-1503 from your car to notify staff that you've arrived. You will meet a nurse on the first floor of the OSC and be escorted directly to the pre-op area.
- **Symptom Screening:** Upon arrival, you will be asked several questions about any COVID-19 symptoms you may be experiencing.
- **Waiting Room:** Waiting areas have been rearranged to ensure proper social distancing.
- **Building Entry:** Please park in open lot and proceed to entrance.
- **Staff Interaction:** Doctors and staff will wear PPE appropriate for your procedure – including masks, gloves and face shields – throughout the entirety of your visit.

AFTER YOUR VISIT

- **Discharge:** You will receive discharge instructions and then be taken to the lobby entrance by wheelchair to meet the person picking you up. Visitors can wait in their cars and a clinician will call them when you are ready for discharge. If you'd like the person picking you up to hear the discharge instructions, we can call them to ensure they're included.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Family members and friends can be updated on your progress via text message with your consent.

Q: *What is the difference between screening and testing?*

A: **Screening** is conducted by asking you questions about any COVID-19 symptoms you have experienced. **Testing** requires taking a swab

sample from your nasal passages or mouth that is then sent to a laboratory for analysis.

Q: *What happens if there is a problem with my preoperative evaluation?*

A: If there is anything in your preoperative evaluation that suggests there might be a problem, your surgery may be postponed. This is for your own safety, as having COVID-19 could create complications with your procedure and recovery. If you have mild symptoms such as a sore throat or cough, these will need to be checked even if your virus test is negative. That way you will know it is safe to go forward with surgery.

Obviously, if there is a true emergency, then surgery will have to proceed even though the risks may be greater.

Q: *If my surgery is postponed, how long do I have to wait to be rescheduled?*

A: Your surgery can be rescheduled once you are symptom-free and your virus test is negative. If you have had COVID-19, you will need to be rechecked by your primary care physician to make sure you are medically cleared for surgery.

Once you are ready for surgery, you will work directly with your surgeon to determine the most appropriate time to book your procedure. We greatly appreciate your patience as we carefully work through the backlog of surgical cases that we have.

Q: *If I am having surgery at a hospital, will I be in an area close to where patients have COVID-19?*

A: We test all patients prior to surgery to ensure they are negative prior to their procedure. If you have a procedure that requires an overnight stay (or longer) at the hospital, you can feel confident that we adhere to strict protocols and infection control standards to protect the safety of all patients and hospital staff, including testing all patients for COVID-19 upon admission.

Q: *Can I bring a family member? Can they wait with me before and after my surgery?*

A: Requests for accommodations (for example,

parents of young children) will be evaluated on an individual basis.

Q: *Should I quarantine before my surgery?*

A: Our recommendation is for you to quarantine for several days before surgery. Typically, this is done between the time you were screened and/or tested and the time of your scheduled surgery. It is important to follow infection prevention guidelines before and after surgery such as social distancing, avoiding crowds and close contact with friends or family members, wearing a mask and frequent and thorough hand washing.

Q: *What happens if I develop symptoms of COVID-19 after my surgery?*

A: Even though you may have tested negative for COVID-19 before surgery, it is certainly possible to contract the virus afterward. If you are experiencing symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose/nasal congestion, shortness of breath, muscle aches or inability to smell, contact your physician and you will be given appropriate treatment.

