



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Mr Alistair Coe MLA (Chair), Ms Tara Cheyne MLA (Deputy Chair), Mrs Vicki Dunne MLA,
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA, Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA

Select Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic Response QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Asked by MRS DUNNE on 24 July 2020

In relation to: Elective Surgery Booklet

As we normally have a suite of pre-operation information for people who are attending for elective surgery, would you consider adding to that advice about keeping yourself COVID-safe in the run-up to your procedure? Would you also alert people that there seem to be some very substantial contraindications for people who have COVID and who have operations? I have had some studies referred to me. Professor Mitchell expressed to me the other day some reservations about those studies, but would it be part of the suite of things we do to alert people that there are contraindications of being operated on if you have COVID and how to keep COVID safe in the run-up to your surgery?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Thank you, Mrs Dunne. I will hand over to Bernadette in a second. I certainly noted that in the interview on ABC Radio Canberra this morning there was some conversation about those studies, which included people who acquired COVID post-operatively, which obviously cannot be caught in a pre-operative COVID-19 test. Clearly there are some potential contraindications, but pre-testing is not necessarily going to capture those. I will hand over to Bernadette to talk about the advice provided pre-operation.

MRS DUNNE: Sure.

Ms McDonald: I might let Mr Peffer take that question.

Mr Peffer: Mrs Dunne, we are just in the process of updating the booklet that is sent out to all of our elective surgery patients. Essentially, we present them with an information pack, which is about what to expect and what to be thinking about in the lead-up to your surgery. As soon as we book someone onto a list, the pack goes out to advise them of what they need to be doing and how the process is going to work. With the team yesterday I saw a draft of a one-pager with this sort of additional information—these are the questions that we are going to be asking; this is the screening process that you will be going through—to give them that information up-front, weeks in advance. It is generally about three weeks in advance of when they need to attend for surgery to cover off exactly those issues you have just raised.

MRS DUNNE: Okay; including the stuff that it can be quite risky if you are operated on and you have COVID?

Mr Peffer: Correct.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you. Could we have a copy of that? Could the committee have a copy of that?

Mr Peffer: Yes. I can take that on notice.

MINISTER STEPHEN-SMITH: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

Please see attached copy of the Booklet and Screening Notification letter to patients.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on the COVID-19 pandemic response

Signature:



Date:

9/9/20

By the Rachel Stephen-Smith, Minister for Health

ACT Surgery Access

Information for consumers on the
ACT Elective Surgery Waiting List



ACT
Government

**Canberra Health
Services**

health.act.gov.au

You and your surgeon have agreed that you should have surgery in hospital. It is important that you know how this is arranged.

Please read this information carefully. It will help you understand how you will get the treatment you need.

What is an elective procedure?

Your doctor may have referred to your procedure as elective. An 'Elective Procedure' is the term given to all non-emergency procedures. These can include cataract surgery, hysterectomy, carpal tunnel surgery and total hip/knee replacements.

This does not mean that your surgery is not important. Your health and wellbeing are always our priority.

Why do some patients wait longer than others?

When you meet with your surgeon, they will make a clinical decision on how urgently you need to have surgery. This process requires the surgeon to allocate you a clinical priority either 1, 2 or 3. This is based on your condition at the time of your visit and is in accordance with the National Elective Surgery Urgency Categorisation guidelines.

This category determines the approximate waiting time for admission to hospital. It ensures priority is given to patients who are most in need of treatment. The time patients wait for their procedure is determined by this clinical priority category.

The hospital makes every attempt to treat you within the timeframe recommended by your surgeon. Your waiting time for surgery is also influenced by the number of operating sessions your surgeon has, but public hospitals must give priority to emergency patients.

Clinical priority categories:

Category 1

Procedures that are clinically indicated within 30 days.

Category 2

Procedures that are clinically indicated within 90 days.

Category 3

Procedures that are clinically indicated within 365 days.

If your condition changes and you believe you need your surgery earlier, then you need to be reviewed by your surgeon/GP to be re-classified.

While it is most likely your surgery will be performed by your referring surgeon, we may schedule your surgery with another surgeon and/or at a different hospital. This may result in you getting your surgery completed earlier.



What is an RFA?

An RFA or Request for Admission is a form that the surgeon will fill out to notify the Territory Wide Surgical Services Team of your intended elective surgery. This will be completed at the time of your appointment with the surgeon. The surgeon will explain your intended procedure to you, assign a clinical priority category and obtain informed consent.

Once the Territory Wide Surgical Services Team receives the completed RFA from your surgeon, your details will be added to the Elective Surgery Waiting List.

What is informed consent?

Your surgeon will talk to you at the time of your appointment about your procedure and the risks, benefits and alternatives available. Your surgeon will give you the opportunity to ask questions and make sure you have enough information to make the right decision. It is your decision whether to go ahead with the procedure. You are allowed to change your mind at any time. If you choose to go ahead you will be asked to sign a consent form with your surgeon.

If your condition changes

If your condition changes, make an appointment to see your GP or your surgeon.





What happens now?

We will contact you from time to time to check that you still need your procedure.

We will try to give you at least three weeks notice before you need to come to hospital.

Sometimes it is necessary to defer booked surgery to make way for life-threatening cases, which are admitted through the hospital's emergency department. These emergency cases will receive priority over elective surgery. However, the hospital will make every effort to avoid such postponements and will reschedule deferred patients as soon as practical.

You can help us by letting us know if:

- you have changed your address or contact details
- you do not want to go ahead with your procedure
- you have had your procedure in another facility
- you are unwell
- you are a carer and need to make arrangements for the person you care for while you have your procedure
- if there are other personal reasons that may require you to cancel or defer your procedure.

What if I'm not ready for surgery?

If you are not ready for surgery because you are unwell, or having other treatment, or for personal reasons, please contact the Territory Wide Surgical Services Team on (02) 5124 9889.

You can only defer your surgery for a limited time. The maximum you can defer your surgery during the period you are on a waiting list is:

- **Category 1** — 15 days
- **Category 2** — 45 days
- **Category 3** — 180 days

Please note that when you defer surgery, these days will not be counted towards your total waiting time.

Why it is important to keep your contact details up to date

It is important that the hospital is able to contact you about your procedure.

If you have any concerns or you can't come to the hospital for your surgery, you need to let us know.

We may take your name off the Elective Surgery Waiting List if:

- you fail to present for a procedure without letting the hospital know; or
- we cannot contact you; or
- you decline or defer the treatment on two occasions for personal reasons; or
- you exceed the number of days you are permitted to defer treatment in each clinical urgency category.

What to bring to hospital

Essential

Please bring:

- Medicare card
- Pyjamas and/or loose comfortable clothing.

Any of the following if applicable:

- Private Health Fund card
- Veterans Affairs Card
- Workers Compensation Claim details
- Third Party Claim details.

All scans relating to your current condition:

- All X-rays
- CT scans
- Ultrasound scans
- MRI's.

Medication — All current Medications in their original packets including:

- Tablets/capsules
- Mixtures
- Inhalers/puffers
- Injections
- Patches
- Creams/ointments
- Vitamins
- Herbal or alternative medicines
- Over the counter medicines.

If you take any aspirin, anti-inflammatory drugs or other blood thinners, they often need to be stopped prior to surgery. Please check with your doctor if you haven't been advised what to do.

If you use a CPAP machine for sleep apnoea, please bring your machine and attachments.

What you may need to arrange before you arrive at the hospital

- Child care
- Pet sitter
- Leave from work
- Someone to drive you to and from hospital.

Valuables

Patients are strongly advised against bringing valuables or surplus clothing into the hospital. Any personal property brought into the hospital is brought at the patient's own risk and under their control; the hospital will not accept liability for loss or damage to such property.

Smoking

If you are having surgery, it is ESSENTIAL that you DO NOT SMOKE for 12 hours prior to your operation. It is preferable to stop smoking 6–8 weeks before your admission to help prevent complications.

In partnership with your GP and your surgical team, ACT Health have developed support services, which are available free of charge, to help you reduce/stop smoking before your surgery.

Your GP has been advised of your surgery and may discuss a plan with you to help stop smoking before your surgery. Smoking is not allowed at any ACT Health facility including the Canberra Hospital and Calvary Hospital.

Nicotine replacement therapy is available to patients during their admission if required.

**Quitline**[®]
13 7848

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

You can contact the Territory Wide Surgical Services Team on (02) 5124 9889.

If you have a concern or complaint about a health service

Consumers can provide feedback to Consumer Feedback and Engagement at the Canberra Hospital by emailing HealthFeedback@act.gov.au

If you wish to provide feedback to Calvary Public Hospital call (02) 6201 6111 and ask to be connected with one of the Clinical Review Officers in the Patients Safety and Quality Unit.

The ACT Human Rights Commission works with consumers and providers to improve health and community services, promote consumer rights and provide accessible and independent means of addressing complaints.

The ACT Human Rights Commission can be contacted by telephoning (02) 6205 2222 or by email at human.rights@act.gov.au



Accessibility

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit:
www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

www.health.act.gov.au | Phone: 132281
Publication No 20/0382

© Australian Capital Territory, Canberra April 2020



ACT
Government

**Canberra Health
Services**

<patient name>
<patient address>
<patient address>
<patient address>

Dear <patient name>

Pre-Surgery COVID-19 Screening

As you may be aware, our health services are enhancing screening processes to keep staff, patients and their loved ones safe from COVID-19. A new digital screening tool is available to make it easier to determine if it is safe for someone to enter a health facility.

ACT health facilities have commenced screening of all staff, patients and visitors. This process allows for a coordinated and uniform approach across the Territory and is in line with the tightening of visitor restrictions as of Monday, 13 July 2020.

You must complete the screening tool before entering a health facility in the ACT **on the day of surgery**. It involves answering a series of simple questions. A green tick or a red cross will determine whether or not it is safe to enter the hospital. You will need to show your results to the screening staff at each of the main entrances.

To access the online screening simply:

- Scan the QR code on the health screening posters as you near the main entrances
or
- Fill in your details online at the ACT website screening.covid19@act.gov.au.
or
- Complete the hardcopy form attached to this letter upon arrival

If you do receive an **X** through the screening tool then you must:

- Remain at home, **do not enter the hospital** for your planned surgery and notify Surgical Bookings(02) 5124 3514
- Access COVID testing, even if you do not display symptoms

We greatly appreciate you taking this opportunity to become familiar with the screening tool prior to being scheduled for you elective surgical procedure. A copy of the screening form is contained within this letter

Should you require any additional information, please refer to the COVID-19 ACT Government website or alternatively contact the Territory Wide Surgical Services Team on (02) 51249889. Staff within this team will be able to provide you with advice regarding your waiting time for elective surgery.

Yours sincerely



Dave Peffer
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Canberra Health Services

7 August 2020