

Surgeries, procedures and tests during the COVID-19 pandemic

A GUIDE FOR PRHC PATIENTS

In March, Ontario's Ministry of Health directed hospitals to reduce non-urgent care to minimal levels. Under provincial guidance, hospitals are now preparing to resume surgeries, procedures and tests in a measured and phased manner once the provincial directive is lifted.

We have developed a staged plan to be able to increase and decrease the amount of non-urgent care we provide as the situation allows, and we continue to monitor the situation closely.

We recognize that this is an extremely challenging time for patients and their families, and that you may have been waiting for your surgery, test or procedure for some time. We are working hard to resume non-urgent care as quickly as possible.

Communication with your physician's office during this time is important. If you are waiting for your surgery, procedure or test and your symptoms have changed, please let your doctor know.

Why were surgeries, procedures and tests postponed?

On March 19, under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, the government of Ontario directed all acute care hospitals to ramp down elective surgeries and non-urgent activities in order to preserve system capacity to deal effectively with COVID-19.

How will patients be prioritized when services ramp back up?

Every patient is important to us. On a case-by-case basis, we continue to monitor clinical urgency and health status while patients wait for their surgery, procedure or test. When we are approved to begin ramping up our services, some patients will need to be prioritized while others continue to wait. Not everyone will be happy. We will do our best to keep you informed at every step of the way.

When will I be rescheduled?

At this time, we may not be able to tell you. Rescheduling will depend on:

- the status of the COVID-19 pandemic
- your health status
- your medical team's schedule
- the availability of resources and supplies

We are currently planning to ramp up the number of surgeries and procedures we provide, but it is possible that we may need to continue to pause or even ramp back down. Ask your doctor to share what information is available about rescheduling and when your condition can be re-evaluated. You should also contact your physician or surgeon if your symptoms have changed.

For up-to-date information about coming to PRHC during the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit our website:

www.prhc.on.ca/cms/covid-19-novel-coronavirus

Will I be tested for COVID-19 before I come to the hospital?

During your pre-operative/pre-procedure call, you will be asked if you have symptoms of COVID-19. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, let your physician know.

Your surgeon's office will have the most up-to-date guidelines through ongoing discussions with the hospital, and will be able to make recommendations about pre-operative COVID-19 testing based on this information.

Tell me about personal protective equipment and surface cleaning in the hospital.

All PRHC visitors and patients coming to the hospital for necessary care are required to wear a mask during their time at the hospital. Visitors who meet the criteria for visiting are expected to wear their mask in the patient room.

Visitors and patients who arrive at PRHC wearing gloves will be asked to remove their gloves and clean their hands when they enter the building.

You and your healthcare team should practice Public Health Agency of Canada recommendations, including cleaning your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, social distancing of at least 2 metres, and avoiding visitors and groups. Operating and procedure rooms will be taking special precautions and ensuring all cleaning guidelines are followed.

Can I have visitors if I am hospitalized?

Visitors are currently restricted to prevent bringing COVID-19 into the facility and also to prevent visitors being exposed to sick patients.

Family presence continues to be supported for **surgical/procedural patients who require anesthesia for pick up and drop off only**. Support people will not be permitted to wait inside the building or visit after the procedure.

Staff porters are available to bring patients to and from the main doors as required.

For more information about temporary changes to family/visitor presence at PRHC, please visit: prhc.on.ca/cms/covid-19-novel-coronavirus

Virtual Visiting

To support family presence while visiting restrictions remain in place, PRHC has launched a virtual visiting program for patients to connect with their families.

The virtual visiting program offers patients without their own personal devices the opportunity to video chat with family and friends by using PRHC devices. Virtual visits are not intended for clinical use.

Appointments can be booked by patients or their families.

- **Patients** should let their primary nurse or unit clerk know that they would like to book a virtual visit
- **Families** should call the virtual visiting hotline at: 705-876-5815 or email virtualvisits@prhc.on.ca to book an appointment

Virtual visit bookings can be made for 30-minute or one-hour time slots.

Who should I call if I have questions where can I go for more information?

Please contact your physician or surgeon if you have questions about your surgery, procedure or test.

Please contact Patient Relations if you have any further questions:

Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
705-743-2121 x. 3674
patientr@prhc.on.ca