



What do I need to know before I have elective surgery?

Information about elective surgery and coronavirus (COVID-19)

2 December 2020

Is it safe to go to hospital for surgery during coronavirus?

Yes. Our hospitals follow national guidelines to help prevent the spread of infections (like coronavirus) and keep you healthy and safe while you are in hospital.

To keep you safe from coronavirus, hospitals are taking extra steps. This includes extra cleaning and hospital staff wearing special equipment, like masks and gloves.

I had coronavirus but I'm better now, do I need to tell my doctor?

Yes. You must tell your doctor if you have had coronavirus. Your doctor needs to be sure you are fully recovered, and may want you to have more tests, so your surgery is as safe as possible.

Why do you need to know if I could have coronavirus?

It is important to know if there is a risk that you could have coronavirus to:

- make your surgery safe for you and your doctor
- to help prevent the spread of coronavirus to healthcare workers and other patients.

Before your surgery, a healthcare worker will ask you some questions to see whether you are at risk of having coronavirus. These questions might include where you live and if you have travelled recently. They might also check whether you have another illness or infection.

On the day of your surgery, a healthcare worker will ask you these questions again and take your temperature. This is to see whether your risk of having coronavirus has changed. Please tell them if you were not asked these questions before.

Do I need to be tested for coronavirus before my surgery?

You will be told if you need to get tested before your surgery. If you do, your doctor or nurse will tell you where you can get tested.

If I get tested, what do I do after the test?

If you need to get tested, you should isolate (stay at home) after your test and before your surgery. This means you have to go straight home after your test. Your results may take up to 2 days to arrive by a text or a phonecall. When you isolate, you can only leave home if:

- there is an emergency, like a fire or family violence

- you need medical help.

There are some circumstances where you do not have to isolate (stay at home) while you wait for your test result. You can ask your doctor or a healthcare worker if this applies to you.

What if I get symptoms after getting tested and before my surgery?

If you get coronavirus symptoms after getting tested and before your surgery, you should get tested again – even if your last test was negative.

Symptoms to watch out for are:

- fever
- chills or sweats
- cough
- sore throat
- shortness of breath
- runny nose
- loss or change of smell or taste.

What questions should I ask about my surgery?

You could ask:

- why you need to have surgery now
- the risks and benefits of having the surgery
- any risks that apply to you in particular
- what you and your doctor expect from the surgery
- how the hospital will keep you safe from infections and complications
- what would happen if you decided to have your surgery later
- if there are treatment options other than the surgery.

Are health services using physical distancing?

Yes, where they can healthcare workers, patients, carers and visitors should stay at least 1.5 metres apart from each other. But this is not always possible because staff may need to be near you and touch you to treat and care for you.

It's especially important to keep 1.5 metres physical distance between yourself and others before and after surgery. This will help keep you and others safe.

What happens if my surgery is delayed?

If your surgery is delayed, your healthcare team will book your surgery for another time. When your surgery is rebooked will depend on:

- your health, safety, and needs (you can ask your doctor and healthcare team about this)
- whether your condition might get worse while you wait
- when your doctor and hospital can fit you in
- changes in government rules.

What should I do if I come into contact with someone who has coronavirus?

Please call your GP (general practitioner) or the coronavirus hotline on **1800 675 398** if you come into contact with someone who:

- has coronavirus (that is, they have tested positive)
- has symptoms of coronavirus and is about to get tested or waiting for their result.

Do not go to the hospital or GP clinic until after you have called them for advice.

Where can I get more information about coronavirus?

Victorian updates: coronavirus.gov.au

National updates: health.gov.au/news/latest-information-about-novel-coronavirus

To find out more information about coronavirus and how to stay safe visit
[DHHS.vic – coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus)

<<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>>

If you need an interpreter, call TIS National on 131 450

For information in other languages, scan the QR code or visit
[DHHS.vic –Translated resources - coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/translated-resources-coronavirus-disease-covid-19)

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For any questions

Coronavirus hotline 1800 675 398 (24 hours)

Please keep Triple Zero (000) for emergencies only

To receive this document in another format phone 1300 651 160 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or [email Project Management Office Communications](mailto:COVID-19PMO-Communications@dhhs.vic.gov.au) < COVID-19PMO-Communications@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

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Available at: [DHHS.vic – coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus)

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