

Preparing to have surgery during the time of COVID-19



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS
Inspiring Quality:
Highest Standards, Better Outcomes

American College of Surgeons guidance to talk with your surgeon about returning to the health care facility

Your surgeon wants you to feel prepared to have surgery during the time of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Your surgeon knows that it's important for you to understand the precautions that the surgical team and facility have taken to ensure a safe and high-quality setting for your operation. This is a very important consideration for your surgical team too.

As hospitals resume most procedures after pausing because of COVID-19, many patients have questions and specific concerns about safely undergoing operations. This discussion guide has been prepared so your surgeon can help you become informed—during a time when COVID-19 exists—about what it means to have surgery performed safely in a health care facility (i.e., hospital, outpatient center, surgeon's office).



Communicating with your surgeon is a shared responsibility

Keep in mind that your surgeon wants to hear what's on *your* mind too. No question or concern should be "off limits" when having this discussion. The questions patients ask, which have always been important to surgeons, are now more meaningful than ever during COVID-19. If you're uncertain about something, don't hesitate to ask your surgeon.



Here's how you benefit from speaking with your surgeon about steps that will be taken to ensure a safe surgical experience:



You receive more details about what you will experience from the moment you arrive at a facility up to the time you leave.



You have more information to help you determine with your surgeon whether scheduling surgery now is right for you.

Before you make a decision about moving forward with surgery, here are some suggested questions to ask your surgeon.



Suggested Questions

Check those questions that are important to you. Then use this document as a guide for your next discussion with your surgeon.



The office visit

- What can I expect when I arrive for my appointment in terms of COVID-19 protective measures?

- Can I wait inside my car when I arrive for the office visit, or do I have to come inside to check in? If so, what safety measures are in place for check-in?

- Can my insurance coverage be confirmed before I check in by telephone or computer? Or do I have to meet with a staff member on-site?

- Will I be with others in a waiting room, or will I be kept in a room away from other patients?

- Do I need to wear a mask? Will all other patients and staff at the surgeon's office wear masks?

- Will I ride in an elevator? Is there an elevator policy? How frequently are the elevators cleaned?

- Will there be physical barriers, such as glass or plexiglass, between staff whom I am speaking with? If not, will they be six feet away from me?

Before my operation and the day it happens

- Will I be tested for COVID-19 and have my temperature taken before my operation?

- Will I be taken into other areas of the facility for testing or exams before the operation begins? Describe that process and what safety measures are in place for patients.

- Who are all the people I can expect to interact with at the facility? How will staff introduce themselves or care for me when they are wearing personal protective equipment?

- Are the staff members I encounter also treating patients who have COVID-19?

- Are patients who have COVID-19 in the same facility as me? If so, what safety measures are in place to ensure we are separated?

- Will I be close to others if I walk through the hallways or other common areas? If so, what safety measures are in place?

The operating room

- What special precautions are being taken to ensure the operating room is safe from COVID-19?

Health care facility management

- How has the facility determined that it is now safe to begin scheduling operations?

- Are federal and local government recommendations for facility management being followed according to our current phase of the COVID-19 recovery plan? If so, how?

- How is the facility disinfected, and how often?

- Is everyone who works at the facility having their temperatures taken and being tested for COVID-19? If so, how often?

- Does the facility have enough personal protective equipment for staff?

After the operation

- How will I receive food, if I stay overnight? How is the food prepared?

- As I recover, will having this procedure put me at a higher risk of getting COVID-19? Why or why not?

- Will the presence of COVID-19 in my community change how long I stay in the facility following surgery?

- Can I have visitors while I recover? If so, how will they be protected while visiting me?

- How will my family receive updates on my well-being?

- How will social distancing impact my recovery from surgery?

Off-site care

- Are telehealth visits or phone calls with a member of my care team an option for me before and after my operation?

- Can home health care services be provided instead of a trip to the facility before or after my operation?

More questions?

Write your other questions here:

