

COVID-19 FAQs

Emergency Management (Appropriate Surgery During COVID-19 Pandemic No 4) (Revocation) Direction 2020

From Thursday 14 May 2020, South Australia will recommence elective surgery procedures in the public and private health systems. Elective surgery was on hold so our hospitals were ready to manage any increase in COVID-19 cases. The restrictions are being lifted to allow SA Health public hospitals to prioritise surgery based on clinical decisions for the most urgent need and those whose procedures are overdue. Private hospitals will also be able to recommence all elective surgery based on their priority assessments.

When will elective surgery start again?

From Thursday, 14 May 2020, public and private hospitals will be able to start increasing the number of procedures and return to full activity. The requirement for public hospitals is that, other than emergency or clinically-determined urgent surgery, patients who are on the overdue list must take priority. This will address the increase in overdue procedures following the national decision in March 2020 to temporarily limit elective surgery because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Was all elective surgery cancelled because of COVID-19?

Urgent and emergency surgery has continued through the COVID-19 situation but other elective procedures were put on hold to ensure the health system around Australia was ready to manage an increase in COVID-19 cases. Some restrictions were lifted at the end of April to allow some procedures to recommence. This change means that the Appropriate Surgery Direction that was put in place under the SA Emergency Declaration will be revoked from midnight Wednesday 13 May 2020 to allow hospitals to resume procedures.

What type of elective surgery will be available?

All elective surgery procedures can recommence, but it will be up to clinical decision-making to determine the urgency of those on the overdue list for procedures in public hospitals in metropolitan Adelaide. This includes patients from country areas who are awaiting procedures in metropolitan hospitals. It is a requirement that the increase in surgery prioritises overdue patients.

When will I know when my surgery is going ahead?

You may not be contacted immediately, as Local Health Networks are working with their surgeons to plan how they will prioritise, but all public and private hospitals will work as quickly as possible to give people notice and resume elective surgery procedures.

Does that mean if my surgery was postponed because of COVID-19, I will have my procedure soon?

It might take a few weeks or months and you will be contacted by the hospital, your doctor or your surgeon's clinic as soon as they have information about your procedure.



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I was already waiting before the COVID-19 pandemic. What does that mean for my elective surgery?

Local Health Networks will be reviewing their waiting lists and will endeavour to treat those that have been waiting the longest in each urgency category as soon as possible. The hospital will determine the urgency of your procedure. My surgery was planned in a private hospital.

What should I do about rescheduling?

Private hospitals in SA are able to resume elective surgery procedures from 14 May 2020 and will be working as quickly as possible to contact patients and begin scheduling procedures. You will probably hear from them soon.

I'm worried that my condition is worse. What should I do?

If you need emergency treatment, call Triple Zero on 000. If you are feeling unwell before your surgery is rescheduled, contact your doctor, GP or specialist about your condition and concerns. If you are contacted by your surgeon or hospital staff, make sure you tell them about your current medical condition.

Is it safe to have surgery and go to hospital with the COVID-19 virus still active?

Our hospitals and theatres have strict infection control measures in place and people should feel safe going to hospital.

Can I book my surgery for later when the pandemic is over?

If you are on a waiting list and overdue for your procedure, it's better to have your elective surgery as soon as you are offered the opportunity for a rescheduled procedure. It's likely that we will be dealing with COVID-19 for some time and that's why we are prioritising overdue procedures to limit the impact on your health because of the delay to surgery. Talk to your doctor about your concerns and ask the hospital for information when they contact you to help you to make your decision.

What about dental surgery or dental services?

Dental services across SA will gradually return to the full range of dental procedures starting from Thursday 14 May 2020, with social distancing and COVID-19 screening processes remaining in place. Talk to your provider, as private dentists will make their own decisions about what procedures they are doing and when. The SA Dental Service will be gradually resuming services and has been working with the Australian Dental Association as part of the national return to regular dental services.



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What about cosmetic surgery?

Approved cosmetic procedures need to have been endorsed by medical practitioners, which require either a referral or a prescription from your doctor. If these procedures are being undertaken in clinics that also have beauty treatments, for example nails, waxing, piercing, tattooing, non-therapeutic massage, they must not offer other services while open for the surgical procedures.

Is there enough personal protective equipment for surgery?

Yes, the decision to recommence elective surgery has been made because the right equipment, pharmaceuticals and staff are available. The safety of patients, clinicians and the community is absolutely vital and will not be compromised. This will be closely monitored for any further supply chain risk.



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