



Healthscope

27 April 2020

Elective Surgery Re-opens at Northern Beaches Hospital

Dear GP,

Our hospital is now well underway with planning for the reintroduction of approved categories of elective surgery, and we want to share the latest advice and guidelines to support this process.

Please appreciate that this is a fast-moving situation and guidance continues to be disseminated. Thank you for your patience as we work through the detail to reinstate appropriate surgery safely, carefully and in accordance with health authority requirements and clinical guidelines.

Below are relevant key principles to keep in mind when considering and recommending patients for surgery.

Elective surgery remains limited

All existing category 1 and priority category 2 surgery will continue as normal.

We will adopt a **gradual** and **controlled** reintroduction of other approved elective surgeries, as elective surgery levels can only increase by 25 percent of our temporary reduced capacity. This means a gradual ramp up to opening **15 sessions per week day**. This will be closely monitored and audited by government and reviewed on 11 May 2020.

These limitations mean that not all surgery, even if it fits within the approved criteria, may be able to be rescheduled in this first phase. We will prioritise surgeries based on systematic screening and clinical need and working fairly across all specialties.

We are also be mindful of Intensive Care capacity, managing our PPE stocks, and maintaining appropriate hygiene and social distancing protocols on site. Currently we have normal ICU bed capacity to support complex patients requiring postoperative critical care.





Assessment criteria for elective surgery procedures

Treating clinicians will decide and recommend patient surgeries that should proceed, guided by the Australian Health Protection Principle Committee (AHPPC) principles below:

- procedures representing low risk, high value care as determined by specialist societies
- selection of patients who are at low risk of post-operative deterioration
- children whose procedures have exceeded clinical wait times
- assisted reproduction (IVF)
- endoscopic procedures
- screening programs
- critical dental procedures.

Patient screening and admission process

We will be using our normal processes to book in elective surgery but to ensure that we can triage patients appropriately to the allocated sessions we require all patients to complete the **Healthscope Patient Registration and Health History** forms via the **Healthscope Admissions Portal**: healthscope.eadmissions.com.au

All patients approved for elective surgery will be screened up to 48 hours before admission, using an additional COVID-19 patient screening questionnaire. Temperature checks will be conducted on arrival to the hospital.

Elective surgery is only to be conducted if the patient is low risk of COVID-19 infection, for example, they have no epidemiological risk factors, respiratory symptoms or fever.

We will also need to exclude vulnerable patients from the expansion in elective surgery. These include but are not limited to:

- Patients > 65 years with chronic medical conditions (Chronic Renal Failure, COPD, CCF, Chronic Cardiac or Lung Disease, Poorly Controlled Diabetes);
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders > 50 years old with chronic medical conditions as above;
- Immunocompromised patients – including those receiving chemotherapy, immunotherapies or high doses steroids;
- Pregnancy





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Future reviews and further expansion

In deciding whether to further relax restrictions on elective surgery, the Government has advised that they will conduct reviews after two and four weeks, based on:

- number of positive cases, both in healthcare workers and patients, linked to increased activity
- PPE use and availability
- volume of procedures and hospitals/system capacity.

I want to reassure you that we have well practiced pandemic protocols and screening in place, as well as excellent infection control measures. A new hospital building certainly assists with infection control and of course we have isolation rooms throughout the hospital so that we can easily separate patients with any type of infectious disease.

Please email GP Liaison Nicola Pellegrini at nicola.pellegrini@healthscope.com.au if we can assist you with any questions regarding referrals.

We thank you for your support and understanding as we seek to navigate this fast-moving and challenging situation, and we will continue to keep you across new advice and guidelines as they appear.

We look forward to taking care of your patients.

Regards,

Dr Peter Thomas
Director Medical Services
Northern Beaches Hospital

