

Like other hospitals in Massachusetts, we are preparing to resume some of the procedures that we had to put on hold during the height of the COVID-19 outbreak in our area. This includes procedures performed in our endoscopy unit.

We have prepared this document to tell you about some of the changes in our policies and other things we are doing to keep you safe when you come in for a procedure. We've also provided answers to common questions.

About the endoscopy unit

The endoscopy unit is set off from other areas of the hospital. We control who has access to the unit. It is staffed by nurses and doctors who have experience protecting patients from infection. It may be comforting to know that providing exceptional infection control has always been part of their work. And during COVID-19, our entire team is taking further steps to ensure your safety and comfort.

Before your procedure

Screening for COVID-19

- Because some people can have COVID-19 and not know it, we are testing all patients who come in for a procedure to make sure they do not have the virus. A nurse from our department will call you some time before your procedure to ask you questions about any symptoms you may have and to tell you how to get a COVID-19 test.
- After you have the test, we ask you to “self-quarantine” before your appointment. That is, **please do not leave your home** after your COVID-19 test unless you have an urgent medical appointment. It is not necessary to stay away from others in your household, as long as none of them are sick. The self-quarantine is done to reduce your chance of exposure to the virus after you've had your test.
- We will call you with the results of your test. If your test is negative, we will confirm the appointment for your procedure. If your test is positive for COVID-19, we will talk to you about what this means.

Information about your escort

- You must have a responsible adult (age 18 or over) drive you home after your procedure. However, one of our new safety policies is to not allow any visitors into the medical center. This includes those driving you in for your procedure and bringing you home.
- Your escort should drop you off at the entrance to the building where your procedure is scheduled. We will call them to come and get you when your procedure is over. We ask that they not wait for you inside the medical center. This is to make sure our patient waiting areas are not crowded.
- **The only exception** to the visitor policy related to your procedure is if you require someone's help to get around (for example, you are in a wheelchair, or you need help finding your way to our unit). If you need special help from your escort on the day of your procedure, **please tell the nurse who calls you before your appointment**. Only one person will be allowed to come with you. Your escort will have to be screened to make sure they are safe to come with you. If you have any questions, please call us at 617-754-8888.

When you arrive

- Please make sure you arrive at the time and location specified on your instructions.
- Your escort should drop you off at the entrance of the building. They will be called to come and get you in about 3 hours.
- You must wear a mask/face covering in our facility. If you don't have one, we will provide one for you.
- If you are not sure where to go, please ask one of the service ambassadors at the information desk in the lobby. They will direct you to the check-in location for your procedure.
- You will need to answer screening questions again at check-in. These are some of the same questions you were asked on the phone. This is for your safety.

After your procedure

- We will call your escort to tell them when you will be ready to leave and where to meet you.
- We will review any results from your procedure and will also give you written discharge instructions. Be sure to speak up if you have any questions for your doctor.

Can I get COVID-19 from my procedure?

The safety of our patients, our staff, and our general community is our top priority.

Our belief that it is safe to perform procedures at this time is based on the best available evidence and on our confidence in our rigorous cleaning and safety protocols. In addition to those outlined above, these include the following.

Reducing exposure to others, especially those who may be ill

- Because we are screening every patient, we can reschedule those who are at greatest risk of having the virus.
- We are not allowing anyone in our unit who is not essential to patient care or to the safe operation of the unit.
- We screen all employees at our facility every day for signs of illness; we require all staff to stay at home if they are sick.
- All employees at our hospital are required to wear a mask when in the building. Those providing patient care are provided with the necessary additional protective equipment.
- Just as you are doing, we are maintaining social distancing as much as possible. This means limiting the number of people in the procedure rooms and nursing station at any given time and spacing out chairs in waiting areas so they are at least six feet apart.

Cleaning

- We have always followed the highest infection control standards established for healthcare facilities. Instruments used during your procedure have always been subject to these very high standards of infection control and this has not changed.
- In the current environment, we have enhanced the cleaning protocols of our spaces over and above our usual and very thorough infection control measures.
- We follow the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); the World Health Organization (WHO); the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH); the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS); and The Joint Commission.

Keeping our spaces clean

We are cleaning our waiting areas and bathrooms even more frequently than usual. This includes cleaning frequently-touched surfaces such as doorknobs, tabletops, countertops, door handles, sinks, and faucets. Hand sanitizer is available for patient and staff use.

We thoroughly clean every procedure and recovery space between patients.