

Like other hospitals in Massachusetts, we are taking every precaution to keep our patients, physicians and staff safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, while still providing essential care for our patients. This includes wearing masks at all times while in the Medical Center and COVID-19 testing for all procedure patients.

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. This is mandatory before all GI procedures. A nurse from our department will call you some time before your procedure to ask you screening questions about any symptoms you may have and to schedule you for a COVID-19 test. If you miss your appointment for your COVID-19 test, we will have to reschedule your GI procedure.
- 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.

When you arrive

- Please make sure you arrive at the time and location specified on your instructions.
- You must wear a mask/face covering in our facility. If you wear a cloth mask or other face covering, we will give you a surgical mask when you arrive.
- 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

- All patients undergoing endoscopic procedures need an escort home, otherwise the procedure will be cancelled, **no exceptions**.
- We will call your escort to tell them when you will be ready to leave and where to meet you. Please make sure your escort is at the medical center at the estimated discharge time, but they should not come to the unit until the nurse calls and tells them to meet you by our check-in desk. Your escort must wear a mask at all times while in the medical center. Parking is free for the first 20 minutes.
- 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 your 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.