

Discussion guide for patients considering a medical procedure during COVID-19

It is important for patients to feel empowered to make healthcare decisions, understand the benefits and risks associated with medical procedures, and feel comfortable about receiving healthcare, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (also known as Coronavirus). This discussion tool was developed as a guide by patients, patient advocates, and medical and scientific experts to help you ask relevant questions regarding your care during the pandemic.

Questions to discuss when deciding to have a procedure:

1. Why do I need to have this procedure? What are the risks associated with having this procedure or not having this procedure? How quickly do you recommend I have it? If I choose to delay the procedure, what are the risks?
2. How might having this procedure affect my risk of getting COVID-19? If I were to get COVID-19, would having this procedure increase the risk that I will have severe symptoms?
3. If I am concerned about having this procedure during COVID-19, are there alternative options to this procedure? If so, what are they? If not, why?
4. Are there telehealth/virtual options for my initial consultation with my doctor or care provider? Can I use telehealth/virtual options for my follow-up appointments? If I need to come in for follow-up appointments: How often will I need to come in-person? What will the interactions be like? What precautions should I take?
5. If my initial consult is in-person, will I need to be tested for COVID-19 beforehand and when? Will I need to be tested for COVID-19 before my procedure? How can I get tested, and what is the test like? If my procedure is delayed, will I have to get retested?
6. What does my post-operation experience look like? Will I be able to go home the day of my procedure, or will I be required to stay overnight or in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU)? If so, for how long?

Questions about your comfort and safety while in a medical facility:

1. Where will my procedure be done? Are patients who have COVID-19 treated in the same facility? If so, how will I be kept separate from them?
2. Are the surgical and nursing staff different from the staff caring for patients with COVID-19? If I am uncomfortable being in a facility where COVID-19 patients are, is there a different facility where I can have the procedure?
3. What protocols are in place at the facility? Are staff tested for COVID-19? What are the patient and staff mask requirements? What are the cleaning practices at the facility?
4. If I see someone or am uncomfortable because someone is not following proper COVID-19 protocols I was told to expect, who should I contact?
5. Will a caregiver, family member, parent/guardian, or friend be allowed to enter the facility with me the day of the procedure? If yes, how many will be allowed? Will they be allowed to visit after my procedure or stay overnight with me while I recover? If not, what options are available for me to see and talk with them? Are cell phones or other devices (tablets or computers) permitted in the room?
6. What is the facility's experience managing COVID-19? Have there been any outbreaks there?
7. What is the current threat level of COVID-19 cases at the facility or in the general area/community?



Once you have scheduled your procedure, your healthcare provider will go over your pre-procedure and post-procedure instructions as part of the informed consent process. The following questions should not replace that conversation but should help ask questions specifically related to COVID-19.

What should I do before my procedure to help me stay safe?

1. Will I need to “quarantine” or isolate myself from family and friends prior to my procedure? If so, for how long?
2. Can I leave the house for any reason (e.g., go to the store, pick up medications)?
3. If for any reason I feel sick before my procedure, who should I call?

What should I expect on the day of my procedure?

1. What are the exact instructions for arriving at the facility for my procedure?
2. What precautions should I take to protect myself? Will masks, gloves, or face shields be provided to me?
3. How will my family member or caregiver be updated during and after my procedure?
4. What does my discharge from the facility look like under COVID-19 precautions? What instructions should I be aware of?

What should I expect after I go home?

1. Who can I call if I have any questions or concerns after my procedure? How should I protect myself from COVID-19 during my recovery?
2. Will I need to “quarantine” or isolate myself from family and friends after my procedure? If so, for how long?
3. Will I be more vulnerable to COVID-19 by having this procedure? If so, for how long?