

## OUTPATIENT AND ELECTIVE SURGERY SERVICE CHANGES - FAQ's

### Outpatient and Elective Surgery changes because of COVID-19

As the Hospital and Health Services deal with the unprecedented situation being experienced across the world because of COVID-19, some services will be impacted.

Impacted services include outpatient clinics. Because of this you may have received a notification that your appointment has been:

- Moved
- Changed to a telephone or telehealth appointment
- Cancelled and postponed
- Remain unchanged

This document answers questions you may have about why your appointment has changed in response to COVID-19.

### Why has my appointment / surgery been changed?

Changes to outpatient appointments have been made to **protect patients and staff** by:

- Enabling physical distancing by:
  - postponing non-urgent outpatient appointments to a later date. Regrettably, at this time we are unable to advise a date of your next booked appointment, however please be assured we are working hard to ensure this will be as soon as possible
  - utilising technology such as telehealth and phone clinics to avoid physical contact
- Conserving personal protective equipment, such as surgical face masks and gowns, for staff to deal with COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19 patients as well as patients requiring urgent care

### Why has my appointment / surgery been changed to a phone or telehealth appointment?

If you have received notification that your appointment has changed to a phone or telehealth appointment it is because your clinical team are confident that they can provide you with the care you need without physical contact.

### My outpatient appointment / pre-admission / anaesthetic review has been changed to a telehealth appointment. What is telehealth?

The [Queensland Health Telehealth Portal](#)<sup>1</sup> provides an easy, safe and secure way to videoconference (VC) with your doctor or health professional from within a web browser on your personal computer (PC), laptop or Mac; or through an app on your tablet or smart phone. If you have received a notice that your appointment has changed to a telehealth appointment you will be contacted with further information and support on how to set up telehealth on your personal device.

### My appointment has been changed to a phone or telehealth appointment. Will I be called / seen by a doctor?

Your appointment will still be conducted by a clinician from your treating team. Depending on your situation your clinical team may include a Specialist Doctor, a Medical Registrar, a Specialist Nurse or an Allied Health Clinician such as a Psychologist, Dietitian or Pharmacist.

Your GP does not need to be present and it is in your best interest to have your telehealth in the safety and comfort of your own home. As with normal face-to-face appointments your GP will receive a letter about your appointment.

### My appointment has been cancelled due to COVID-19. Why was I not offered a phone or telehealth appointment?

If you have received notification from the hospital that your appointment has been cancelled due to COVID-19, this is likely because the clinician needs to see you in person. You will be offered another appointment as soon as the hospital can provide you with a new appointment date and time.

**My appointment was cancelled / postponed. Will I get another appointment / surgery date?**

Yes, you will be offered another appointment / surgery date as soon as the hospital is able to provide you with a new appointment date and time. You will remain on the outpatient / elective surgery waiting list and will not lose your position on the outpatient waiting list. While responding to COVID-19, clinical teams are triaging patients to ensure the most urgent patients are seen first. Please continue to monitor your condition with your GP or clinician that referred you for this appointment.

**My appointment / surgery was cancelled but my condition is worsening. What do I do?**

Contact your GP to discuss your care and to provide you advice on how to manage your condition. If required, your GP may request the hospital book an urgent appointment / hospital review for you.

If your condition is too serious to wait or is an emergency, call 000 and ask for an ambulance or attend your closest hospital emergency department.

**I received a message that I am still required to attend my upcoming appointment / surgery, but I am sick or in self-isolation. What should I do?**

To ensure the health and wellbeing of all patients and staff, if you are currently

- in self-isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19 precautions,
- sick, have a fever, and/or a flu-like illness,
- or unable to attend this appointment for other reasons,

Please advise the hospital as soon as possible so they can notify your treating clinical team and arrange another appointment for you at a later date.

**I received a message that I am still required to attend my upcoming appointment / surgery. Why was it not cancelled?**

Your clinical team has requested you attend in person because of your specific care needs.

Your ongoing clinical review in the outpatient clinic is important to ensure that your medical condition is being monitored for changes.

**What do I need to know prior to coming to hospital for my appointment / surgery?**

- To practice social distancing to slow down the spread of COVID-19, hospitals have introduced temporary changes to visitor arrangements. Each hospital will have their own visitor arrangements in place including limiting or preventing visitors at this time – please check this with your hospital beforehand.
- Adhere to physical distancing requirements by keeping a minimum of 1.5 meters between yourself and others when you attend the hospital.
- All waiting and consultation areas, toilets, and shared spaces are being frequently cleaned and sanitized.
- Hand sanitizing facilities are available throughout the hospital.
- Hospital entrance points will display instructions for patients that attend who are showing signs of being unwell. If you are unwell, please phone the hospital prior to arriving for your appointment / surgery.

**I would like to know more about COVID-19.**

To stay informed and read the latest announcements about COVID-19 and up-to-date advice for your situation, google QLD Health and click on the 'Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) information' link to take you to the Queensland Health website dedicated to Novel coronavirus → [www.health.qld.gov.au/coronavirus](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/coronavirus)

**Haven't answered your questions?**

Contact the hospital that your appointment / surgery is booked with and ask to be connected to the outpatient department or elective surgery booking office.

If your health deteriorates or you have any further questions regarding your condition, please contact your GP.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during this time.