



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality
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Memorandum

TO: Massachusetts Hospital Chief Executive Officers and Administrators
Ambulatory Surgical Centers

FROM: Elizabeth Kelley, MPH, MBA, Director
Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality

DATE: December 7, 2020

RE: Nonessential, Elective Invasive Procedures in Hospitals and Ambulatory Surgical Centers during the COVID-19 Outbreak

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to work with state, federal and local partners on the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2, and we continue to appreciate the essential role you have in responding to this evolving situation.

This guidance has been updated since the initial surge in the spring to reflect enhanced understanding and the need to mitigate any unintended consequences to patients. This guidance should not discourage patients from seeking necessary care at their hospital or provider.

Pursuant to an Order issued by the Commissioner of Public Health on December 7, 2020, and to focus health care personnel resources on responding to the COVID-19 outbreak, effective 12:01 a.m. on December 11, 2020 all hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers are directed to postpone or cancel nonessential elective invasive procedures. Hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers shall support the redeployment of those staff conducting nonessential elective invasive procedures to hospital inpatient units and facilities that provide essential and necessary services. Hospitals shall make every effort to preserve their inpatient capacity by cancelling nonessential electives and redeploying staff.

DPH defines nonessential, elective invasive procedures as procedures that are scheduled in advance because the procedure does not involve a medical emergency and where delay will not

be adverse to the patient's health; provided, that terminating a pregnancy is not considered a nonessential, elective invasive procedure under this guidance.

Preventative services, pediatric care or immunizations, and necessary inpatient procedures that would lead to high risk or significant worsening of the patient's condition if deferred should continue and are not required to be cancelled under this guidance.

In accordance with the above guidelines, providers at each hospital or ambulatory surgical center shall use their clinical judgment on a case by case basis regarding any invasive procedures that must be done. The ultimate decision about whether a procedure is essential, or nonessential is based on clinical judgement of the patient's need and should align with the resurgence planning developed by the hospital or with policies developed by ambulatory surgical centers.

DPH strongly encourages all hospitals in Massachusetts to monitor the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) website and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for up-to-date information and resources:

- CMS website: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/EPRO/Current-Emergencies/Current-Emergencies-page>
- CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/index.html>

Additionally, please visit DPH's website that provides up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Massachusetts: <https://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus>.