

Media Release

The Hon Jenny Mikakos MLC

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services – COVID-19

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



Tuesday, 14 July 2020

CORONAVIRUS TESTING FOR ELECTIVE SURGERY PATIENTS

Public and private patients from metropolitan Melbourne and the Mitchell Shire will now be tested for coronavirus before their elective surgery to help better protect patients and healthcare workers from the risk of infection.

Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos said that while elective surgery was continuing throughout the pandemic it was important to manage the higher risks associated with the increased number of cases throughout Victoria.

Screening patients for coronavirus before they get to hospital will provide them with the best chance at recovery, while also providing an added layer of protection for the doctors and nurses caring for them.

Public and private patients will be tested around a week before their scheduled surgery and will be asked to self-isolate until their surgery to reduce the risk of contracting coronavirus. If a patient tests positive their surgery will be postponed until they have recovered, unless the surgery is urgent.

Anyone needing emergency surgery will not be impacted by these changes – the current coronavirus screening protocols will remain in place for those patients. No emergency patients will be compromised by having to wait for a test or result.

The elective surgery testing program is based on the latest expert advice from Safer Care Victoria, and is supported by the Chief Health Officer.

Victoria's public hospitals have been advised to remain at 75 per cent of normal elective surgery activity to ensure our public hospitals have the capacity they need to provide lifesaving care if coronavirus cases continue to rise.

Victoria has agreements in place with most of our major private operators which have enabled the state's hospital bed and staffing capacity to expand.

Private hospitals can determine the level of elective surgery activity they can safely undertake and have extensive plans in place to wind down quickly if needed.

The Government is investing \$1.9 billion as part of its coronavirus health system preparedness response, including new equipment and additional PPE, including more than 86 million gloves, 34 million surgical masks, 2 million face shields, 1.3 million N95 masks and 1.7 million gloves.

For the latest information and advice on coronavirus visit dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

"We understand the anxiety patients can feel when waiting for surgery and we thank all Victorians for their patience during these challenging times."

"Testing patients prior to their surgery is the best way to protect both patients and our dedicated healthcare workers from this highly infectious and deadly virus."

"It's important people continue to look after their health during the pandemic – no one should put off seeking medical care if they need it – our hospitals are safe and open to everyone."