

Our employees have been deservedly recognized as heroes for their selfless dedication during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are entering the next phase of resurgence and resuming many in-person visits, procedures and surgeries. Use the answers below to respond consistently and confidently to frequently asked patient questions.

If you are asked a question that is not addressed here and for which you do not know the answer, tell the patient you do not know the answer and will get back to them shortly. Take their name and number and get back to them to provide them with the name and number of the individual they need to speak to for assistance with their question.

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Use the answers below to respond consistently and confidently to frequently asked patient questions.

Safety Questions:

- ➔ If a patient asks **“Is it safe for me to go to my upcoming doctor's appointment?”** respond with:
 - We have taken extra steps to make sure all care environments and operating rooms are safe for patients and providers. We regularly and rigorously clean and disinfect waiting rooms and patient care areas; require masks for all staff, patients and visitors; have made it easier to maximize physical distancing in our facilities; and implemented new processes such as contactless check-in and check-out.
- ➔ If a patient asks **“What precautions is Penn Medicine taking to make sure the environment is safe for me?”** respond with:
 - Princeton Medical Center regularly receives top grades in The Leapfrog Group’s hospital safety score, which rates hospitals on how well we protect patients from injuries and infections.
 - We’re one of the few hospitals in the US that have 100 percent fresh air in patient care areas.
 - We have always been aggressive in providing a safe environment and we are doing even more now.
 - ✓ Screening all patients, visitors and staff for symptoms every day. Typically, patients with symptoms are referred for testing and their appointments are rescheduled if they test positive for COVID-19. Staff with symptoms are tested and those whose tests are positive must stay home until they are fully recovered.
 - ✓ Thermal screening of all patients, visitors, and staff every day.
 - ✓ Universal masking policy which requires all staff, patients, and visitors to wear masks at all times.

- ✓ Before certain procedures or surgeries, patients have a COVID-19 test 72 hours prior to admission. If a patient tests positive, a decision will be made between the patient and his or her surgeon regarding the safety of delaying the procedure.
- ✓ Surgical waiting areas, as well as pre- and postoperative areas have been configured to promote physical distancing.
- ✓ Each operating room is thoroughly cleaned between cases in accordance with infection control guidelines by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH).
- ✓ Waiting areas are cleaned several times per day, in accordance with infection control guidelines by the CDC, WHO and NJDOH.

➔ If a patient asks **“What precautions should I take when I come in for an appointment or surgery?”** respond with:

- One day before your appointment, you will receive an automated text or call that is designed to screen patients for COVID-19 symptoms. Please respond to the text or answer that call. If you have any symptoms that could be consistent with COVID-19 (these include fevers, chills, cough, loss of sense of taste or smell, muscle pain, headache, or sore throat), you will receive a call back from a nurse. He or she will review your symptoms with you and determine if you need a COVID-19 test, a telemedicine visit, or if you should reschedule your appointment or surgery.
- When visiting a Princeton Health facility, a mask will be issued to you by a Princeton Health representative upon your arrival. Please wear it throughout your stay.
- Follow these additional precautions for preoperative self-isolation in between your being tested for COVID-19 and the time you report for your surgery or procedure:
 - Stay home except to get medical care.
 - Separate yourself from others in your home, use a separate bathroom if possible, and avoid sharing personal household items such as utensils, soaps, phones, computers, etc.
 - Wear a face mask when you must be around others in your home.
 - Wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol before eating, before preparing food, after going to the bathroom, after blowing your nose, after coughing, and after sneezing.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Frequently disinfect common areas such as countertops, doorknobs, and light switches.

➔ If a patient asks **“Is there someone I can talk to if I feel anxious or scared to come in for care?”** respond with:

- Patients feeling anxious or who have concerns about coming in for care should call our hotline at (833) 983-1350 to speak with one of our highly trained and compassionate nurses. Our care teams include specialists in behavioral health. We can connect you with a behavioral health specialist who can talk with you.

- ➔ If a patient asks **“Do Penn Medicine staff and physicians have the protective equipment they need to keep me safe?”** respond with:
 - Yes, we have sufficient PPE (personal protective equipment) to ensure that you and our staff are safe. All of our patient care staff have face masks, respirators if indicated, face shields or goggles, gowns and gloves.

- ➔ If a patient asks **“What is Penn Medicine doing to make sure I don’t come in contact with someone who has COVID-19?”** respond with:
 - We are testing symptomatic patients and employees for COVID-19.
 - We are testing patients for COVID-19 prior to certain surgeries and procedures.
 - Surgical waiting areas, as well as pre- and postoperative areas have been configured to promote physical distancing.
 - Penn Medicine hospitals are caring for patients in specific COVID-19 units that are separate from other patient care areas, in order to optimize our infection control practices and protect patients and staff.

- ➔ If a patient asks **“Are there different safety practices at different locations?”** respond with:
 - No. Princeton Medical Center, Princeton House Behavioral Health and our ambulatory sites are taking the same precautions to prevent exposure to COVID-19. All Princeton Medicine Physicians practices use the same precautions as well.

- ➔ If a patient asks **“What will it be like in the waiting room? Will you limit the number of people? Will people be required to wear masks? Will we have to wait six feet apart?”** respond with:
 - Everyone is required to wear a mask and one will be issued to you upon your arrival at a Princeton Health facility. A mask will also be issued to any support person who accompanies a patient. If you arrive with your own mask or face covering from home, you must wear the mask that is provided to you by a Princeton Health representative and may place your own mask under or over the mask that is issued to you by Princeton Health. We are asking everyone to wear a mask issued by Princeton Health because we are confident the masks we provide offer the appropriate level of protection and are not in the position to evaluate the masks that enter the building.
 - We enforce physical distancing of at least six feet and our waiting rooms have been reconfigured to only allow a limited number of people in them at one time. Compliance with all of our safety measures is monitored and enforced by our staff.
 - We have expanded some contactless check-in and check-out registration procedures which can reduce physical contact and save time at visits.

- ➔ If a patient asks **“Where do I park? Is there valet parking?”** respond with:
 - Valet service is temporarily suspended at all Penn Medicine locations to limit COVID-19 exposure. Please allow extra time for parking. We recommend you call your provider’s office if you have questions about parking or for any other special instructions.

- ➔ If a patient asks **“How are the facilities cleaned between patients? Exam rooms, equipment, other? How frequently is the waiting room cleaned?”** respond with:
 - Operating rooms and exam rooms are thoroughly cleaned between each case in accordance with infection control guidelines by the CDC, WHO and NJDOH.
 - Waiting areas are also cleaned several times daily, in accordance with infection control guidelines by the CDC, WHO and NJDOH.

Procedures:

- ➔ If a patient asks **“What criteria is Penn Medicine using to prioritize which types of patients/procedures should come in?”** respond with:
 - Your physician will assess your need for surgery or a procedure based on your medical condition and risk for disease progression and a patient’s decision to have surgery or procedure, as well as the availability of medical-surgical and ICU beds, and key resources including anesthesia, testing, blood products, PPE and other supply chain items.
- ➔ If a patient asks **“Can I postpone my surgery? What are the risks of postponing my surgery?”** respond with:
 - It is important that you discuss this with your doctor so you can make an informed decision based on your medical condition.
- ➔ If a patient asks **“What is an elective surgery?”** respond with:
 - When a surgery is considered ‘elective,’ it does not mean it is optional. An elective surgery is a medically necessary procedure that you and your surgeon decide when to schedule, together. Urgent, or emergency surgeries, on the other hand, may be life threatening and cannot be scheduled in advance.
- ➔ If a patient asks **“I was scheduled for a [joint replacement.] You say it’s elective but I’m in a ton of pain. Why can’t I get it now?”** respond with:
 - A [joint replacement] is an example of an elective surgery. However, when a surgery is considered ‘elective,’ it does NOT mean it is optional. An elective surgery is a medically necessary procedure that you and your surgeon decide when to schedule, together. It is important that you discuss your pain with your doctor so you can make an informed decision based on your specific medical condition.
- ➔ If a patient asks **“How do I get a radiology exam or procedure?”** respond with:
 - *If you are a patient of Princeton Health*, please contact the Central Scheduling Department (CSD) at (609) 853-7070 for an appointment.

- ➔ If a patient asks **“Do I have to schedule my radiology exam ahead of time or can I just come in to a location?”** respond with:
 - Princeton Health requires appointments for radiology exams, as well as other outpatient testing and treatment visits. This will help us to shorten your wait time and continue to limit the number of people in the hospital at any given time.

- ➔ If a patient asks **“I have a lab order from my physician. How long will it take to get done?”** respond with:
 - The Laboratory Patient Service Centers are prioritizing orders for patients who require urgent laboratory testing. If you have routine or non-urgent lab testing orders from your provider that can be delayed safely, we ask that you postpone those orders so our lab professionals can focus on urgent testing. If you are not sure how long you can safely delay, please speak with your provider.
 - At this time, testing for laboratory orders is being scheduled by appointment. We are not accepting walk-ins for lab testing.

Testing:

- ➔ If a patient asks **“Do I need to test negative for COVID-19 before I have my surgery? How does that process work? What happens if I test positive?”** respond with:
 - Penn Medicine’s infectious disease experts have identified certain surgeries and procedures that require testing prior to their performance. If the SARS-CoV-2 virus associated with COVID-19 was NOT detected in your test, your surgery will proceed as planned. If you test positive, a decision will be made between you and your surgeon regarding the safety of delaying your procedure. In most cases if your surgery is not of an emergent nature, it will be delayed for a short period of time to make sure that you are healthy. We do have practices in place to be able to perform surgeries safely on patients with COVID-19 if they are of an emergent nature. You may be asked to have a repeat COVID test in 1-2 weeks if you test positive and continue to have no symptoms, to reevaluate the timing of your surgery.
 - If you test positive you will receive daily follow up calls from our medical team to review your symptoms and provide supportive care at home.

- ➔ If a patient asks **“How do I go about getting tested?”** respond with:
 - We have in-house testing capabilities with drive-thru test collection available if necessary; your care team will talk to you about the best way for you to get tested.

- ➔ If a patient asks **“Will I be tested when I come in for an appointment? Are there screening procedures?”** respond with:
 - We screen patients for symptoms at the time of their visit to our practices and on the day of surgery. We will ask you questions to determine if you have any symptoms as well as take your temperature.

Visitors:

- ➔ If a patient asks **“What is Penn Medicine’s visitation policy during COVID-19?”** respond with:
 - Currently, Penn Medicine has protocols in place to maximize the safety of all who enter our hospitals and facilities. These safety protocols include limiting visitors to accompany patients to appointments or see them in the hospital.
 - Due in part to different directives from the PA and NJ state governments, our hospitals and facilities are operating differently in regard to their visitor guidelines.
 - Please visit the Penn Medicine website at www.pennmedicine.org/coronavirus and click on “Visitor Guidelines” to read the visitation policies for Penn Medicine hospitals and facilities. If you have questions, contact your provider.

Post-Discharge Care:

- ➔ If a patient asks **“Will I need to come in for a follow-up, or can that be done with telemedicine?”** respond with:
 - Your doctor will let you know if you need an in-person visit or if you can have a post-op visit by telephone or video.
- ➔ If a patient asks **“What if I need postoperative rehabilitation, physical therapy or post-discharge care?”** respond with:
 - If you need rehabilitation or any other care when you leave the hospital, a dedicated Case Manager and/or Social Worker will work with you to help identify the best options for the care and then coordinate the transitions to access the care as smoothly and safely as possible. We will take every precaution to ensure your safety when identifying and providing this care. This will start as early as scheduling, when your care team will work with you to identify the most appropriate postoperative plan, specific to your surgery and individual needs. Options may range from home with self-care or skilled-care (nursing & therapy) to more intensive rehabilitation services that could include additional care in a skilled nursing facility, acute rehabilitation hospital or specialty hospital. Services may be provided in person or virtually based on your specific needs and goals.
 - In the event your post-surgery needs are limited to outpatient physical, occupational or speech therapy, you will be able to coordinate those visits independently. Outpatient care can be provided either in person or via a convenient, secure telehealth platform. Please call (609) 853-7840 for more information.
- ➔ If a patient asks **“Will I have enough bandages to dress my wound? What if I need additional care items that are not easy to procure right now?”** respond with:
 - Through our home care program, we can arrange a home care visit and provide you with the supplies you need.

- ➔ If a patient asks **“Do I need to self-quarantine after surgery? Does my family need to self-quarantine because I’ve been exposed?”** respond with:
 - Quarantine is only necessary if you have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 or if you have tested positive. To reduce your risk of exposure prior to surgery, we recommend you stay at home, practice physical distancing, wear a face covering or mask when going outside of your home, and wash your hands frequently.

Insurance:

- ➔ If a patient asks **“Since I scheduled my surgery or appointment, I lost my job and no longer have health insurance (or my insurance changed). What should I do?”** respond with:
 - Penn Medicine offers a number of programs to help patients determine the best options for their unique financial situation. Patients with limited or no health insurance, or those on a fixed or limited income, are encouraged to speak with our financial counselors who can provide information on programs available to help fund healthcare services and potential available options. Please call Princeton Health’s Financial Counselor at (609) 853-7852.