



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
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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:** March 15, 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.

Pursuant to an Order issued by the Commissioner of Public Health, and to focus health care personnel resources on responding to this outbreak and conserve the critical shortage of personal protective equipment, all hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers are directed to postpone or cancel any nonessential, elective invasive procedures until the State of Emergency is terminated by the Governor, or until rescinded by the Commissioner of Public Health, whichever shall happen first.

DPH recommends that providers at each hospital or ambulatory surgical center use their clinical judgment on a case by case basis regarding any invasive procedures that must be done to preserve the patient's life and health. This does not apply to the cancellation or delay of life sustaining care.

DPH defines nonessential, elective invasive procedures as procedures that are scheduled in advance because the procedure does not involve a medical emergency; provided, however, that terminating a pregnancy is not considered a nonessential, elective invasive procedure for the

purpose of this guidance. However, the ultimate decision is based on clinical judgement by the caring physician.

Examples of nonessential, elective invasive procedures may include but are not limited to:

- Any procedures involving skin incision
- Injections of any substance into a joint space or body cavity
- Orthopedic procedures (e.g. hip or knee replacement)
- Endoscopy (e.g., colonoscopy, bronchoscopy, esophagogastric endoscopy, cystoscopy, percutaneous endoscopic gastronomy, J-tube placements, nephrostomy tube placements)
- Invasive radiologic procedures
- Dermatology procedures (e.g. excision and deep cryotherapy for malignant lesions-excluding cryotherapy for benign lesions)
- Invasive ophthalmic procedures including miscellaneous procedures involving implants
- Oral procedures (e.g. tooth extraction)
- Podiatric invasive procedures (e.g., removal of ingrown toenail)
- Skin or wound debridement
- Kidney stone lithotripsy
- Colposcopy and/or endometrial biopsy

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>.