

FACT SHEET

ELECTIVE SURGERY AND PROCEDURES

March 24, 2020

Today, the Department issued guidance directing that all Military Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs) and Dental Treatment Facilities (DTFs) postpone all elective surgeries, invasive procedures, and dental procedures as of March 31, 2020 for 60 days.

This is in keeping with an [Executive Order](#) to apply critical medical resources (medical staff and equipment) where they are most needed, and reduce COVID-19 exposure risk to DOD medical staff and beneficiaries.

The DOD remains committed to addressing patient concerns and care, and maintaining our capabilities for the national response – all while maintaining the readiness of our military force.

WHY?

This action is being taken to:

- Align with actions being taken across the nation to conserve vital healthcare resources for expected surges in the COVID-19 public health emergency
- Increase medical staff availability to meet projected demand
- Conserve bed space, equipment, and supplies
- Protect our patients, medical personnel and communities from further exposure and transmission of COVID-19

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Any impacted patient (whose procedure will be postponed) will be contacted either by phone or a means that will confirm receipt. The individual patient's provider team or MTF patient advocate office are standing by to answer any questions that affected individuals may have.

EXCEPTIONS

There are two exceptions to the policy, if the MTF or DTF commander or director determines there is adequate capacity to safely authorize a surgery or procedure. Specifically, there may be an exception when:

- the procedure is required to maintain the deployability and readiness of service members
- a provider determines that postponing the procedure would cause harm to the patient

Q1. What is “elective”?

A1. Elective surgeries and procedures are those that are not urgent and can be rescheduled for a later date. Examples include but are not limited to: laser surgery, hernia repair, non-emergent back surgery, colonoscopies, and joint replacements. MTFs and DTFs will continue to conduct surgeries and procedures to save lives and avoid further harm from underlying conditions or diseases, or where the risk of delaying the procedure outweighs all other considerations.

Q2. What do I do if I really need my procedure?

A2. We encourage those who are impacted by this policy to talk to their local MTF or DTF.

Q3. Who is impacted by this policy?

A3. This policy applies to all eligible beneficiaries who use our MTFs or DTFs including: Active Duty Service Members, their family members, retirees and their family members, Reserve Component and National Guard service members on active duty or issued a delayed-effective date active duty order, and any other eligible beneficiary.

Q4. Who do I call if I have questions?

A4. Work through your MTF or DTF; each facility can address your concerns, and can provide guidance on rescheduling and how to proceed.

Q5. How will this impact the coronavirus outbreak?

A5. In the executive order, the President stated: “To ensure that our healthcare system is able to surge capacity and capability to respond to the spread of COVID-19, it is critical that all health and medical resources needed to respond to the spread of COVID-19 are properly distributed to the Nation’s healthcare system and others that need them most at this time.”

Q6. Are you closing the Military Medical Treatment Facilities?

A6. No. Military clinics and hospitals will remain open. This is specifically for elective surgeries and procedures. For those who may have COVID-19 symptoms, we encourage you to call your local treatment facility’s COVID hotline and follow the instructions on how to seek care.

Q7. What will Military Medical and Dental Treatment Facilities continue in terms of offering services that are non-COVID related?

A7. Non-elective procedures, particularly acute and urgent care, will continue, as well as procedures that will keep a Service member medically ready and deployable. We will continue to provide routine appointments and exams, such as check-ups, specialty consultations, and prenatal visits at this point in time. However, individual MTFs and DTFs may further limit availability based on response demands.