



What You Need to Know About Your Upcoming Surgery or Procedure During COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions

How has Carthage Area Hospital (CAH) determined that it's now safe to begin scheduling surgeries or procedures?

During the COVID pandemic response period, CAH was still performing vital surgeries and procedures for patients. These were done when a delay could cause harm to the patient. We have been weighing the risk of delay with the benefit from moving forward with the plan for care. We are doing this on a regular basis for all planned surgeries and procedures. This evaluation has been done by a team of experts in caring for patients with complex health needs and in infection prevention and control. Our medical and surgical teams have taken steps to help ensure the safety of all patients at CAH.

Can I postpone my surgery until the COVID-19 crisis is over?

As with any planned surgery or procedure, we must weigh the risk of delay with the benefit of having your surgery. In some cases, it may not be safe to wait longer. Also, CAH as well as other health systems across the nation will likely be affected by COVID-19 for many months to come.

We have expertise in caring for patients with complex health needs and in infection prevention and control. Your surgeon and their team are working diligently to decide whether your surgery can be safely delayed. If you have been called to set up your surgery, they feel the benefits of doing your surgery outweigh the risks of coming to the hospital. If you are wondering if your surgery can be delayed until after the COVID-19 crisis is over, talk with your surgeon to see if this is safe for you.

Will I be safe in the hospital if CAH is treating COVID-19 patients?

Our infection prevention processes are aimed at protecting our patients and visitors, as well as providers and staff. Everyone, including employees and visitors coming in our hospitals and clinics, will be checked and screened for symptoms and to find out if they have been in contact with people or in places that have known COVID19 illness. Everyone will be offered to wear a mask as it can help contain "droplets," or the liquid that comes out of your mouth or nose. It can also prevent the spread of infection to others. Across the CAH campus, we have units that are used to safely isolate and care for patients with COVID-19. These patients are kept in special isolation to protect other patients, providers and staff.

Can I still get medical and surgical care while the "shelter-in-place," order is in effect?

CAH and your providers are able to offer telehealth visits for times when you are not able or do not feel safe coming into the clinic. This lets you talk with your provider through a video chat. You get care advice and recommendations without coming into the clinic. Video visits are for routine medical visits that are not urgent.

You can call your provider's clinic to set up the visit.

If your clinical team has been in contact with you about scheduling your surgery, it's been determined that the benefits of doing your procedure outweigh the risks of coming to CAH even while the "shelter-in-place," order is in effect. Medical and surgical care are considered essential needs and you should be able to come to CAH for care.

How does COVID-19 affect my recovery from surgery?

We want to perform your surgery or procedure in the safest way possible. One of our staff members will contact you ahead of time to ask you about possible signs of COVID-19. We want to make sure we are not doing any surgery or procedure at a time when you are sick. Even if you do not show any signs of the virus, we will do coronavirus testing on you before your procedure. This helps us to ensure that you do not have a procedure with the chance of having COVID-19. It also allows us to give you the best care possible and promote a smooth recovery.

Please let us know if you have had close contact with someone who is known or suspected to have COVID-19 (i.e. such as a household member or caregiver). We may need to adjust or change our plans because of this.

Am I able to bring someone with me?

Our team is working around the clock to stay on top of the ever-changing COVID-19 situation. This is to ensure both excellent patient care, as well as family and visitor safety. Unfortunately at this time, per the Department of Health, hospitals must suspend all visitations **EXCEPT** for patient support persons, or family members and/or legal representatives of patients in imminent end-of-life situations. Patients are **NOT** allowed to have visitors while in the hospital until the risk of spreading COVID-19 is no longer a threat. We will work with your support person(s) for your drop-off and pick up before and after your surgery or procedure.

In any case where visitors are allowed, visitors must be checked and screened for symptoms of COVID-19. Those that have the virus and screen positive will **NOT** be allowed to visit.

Visitors that are found to have the virus, will be given information, including details about how to help stop the spread to others near them. We also recommend that they get care from their primary provider.

Does the current COVID situation change how long I stay after my surgery or procedure?

While we think that coming to the hospital for your surgery or procedure is safe, we also believe that limiting your length of stay after surgery will help further reduce your chance of contact with COVID-19. Your clinical teams will work with you to stay ahead of any needs you may have after your surgery or procedure. This may include:

- A ride home
- Support during your recovery
- A place to go to after your procedure

Our goal is to keep you in the hospital until your health is strong enough for you to safely leave. If you have issues that need to be addressed before your surgery or procedure, please contact your care team before coming to the hospital. This will help ensure a smooth transition out of the hospital afterward.