

RECOMMENDATIONS ON LIMITATIONS OF ELECTIVE AND NON-URGENT MEDICAL AND DENTAL PROCEDURES

March 17, 2020

The Surgeon General has advised a halt to all hospital elective procedures to ensure resources are available to treat patients with coronavirus (COVID-19), while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommendations for specific [health care settings](#) to minimize risk once there is community spread. **In addition to halting all hospital elective procedures, the District of Columbia Department of Health (DC Health) is recommending that ALL elective medical procedures, non-urgent hospital and outpatient visits, and non-urgent dental procedures be postponed to preserve health care capacity as our community mitigation strategies work to flatten the epidemic curve.**

DC Health is recommending this for a variety of reasons:

1. The **Key Goals** for the U.S. healthcare system in response to the COVID-19 outbreak are to:
 - Reduce morbidity and mortality
 - Minimize disease transmission
 - Protect healthcare personnel
 - Preserve healthcare system functioning
2. Facilities may need to respond to a surge in patients requiring care. Hospital resources need to be conserved for those individuals who most need hospital level-of-care, particularly as we anticipate an increase in the number of individuals requiring hospitalization for treatment for COVID-19.
3. Medical and dental procedures require sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure that neither health care workers nor patients are inadvertently infecting other people. PPE is another resource that may need to be conserved as much as possible for use by those health care workers who treat people or are most likely to come into contact with people with contagious diseases, including COVID-19.
4. While many elective procedures have limited side-effects, all procedures carry the possibility of complications that may necessitate additional medical treatment.
5. In an abundance of caution to conserve medical resources, elective or non-urgent medical and dental procedures should be postponed if the delay will not cause harm. Providers are encouraged to use telehealth options as appropriate. If telehealth is not an appropriate option, providers should reschedule appointments whenever possible.

DC Health is committed to ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of all residents of the District of Columbia. The District of Columbia Government and residents appreciate the cooperation and dedication of all healthcare providers in this critical time. To help with this effort, we encourage everyone to regularly check <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/> for the most up to date information related to COVID-19. Also, visit CDC's page on interim guidance for healthcare facilities at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/guidance-hcf.html>.