



Novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)

Interim guidance for patients presenting for elective surgery or outpatient clinic appointments under 14-day self-isolation

Context

The following people are required to self-isolate due to the risk they may have been exposed to the 2019 novel coronavirus:

- Travellers returning from mainland China or Iran in the last 14 days, the Republic of Korea (on or after 5 March 2020), Italy (on or after 11 March 2020), or from any overseas country (on or after 16 March 2020).
- Close contacts of confirmed cases of COVID-19 until 14 days after last close contact with the confirmed case.

Advice on elective surgery

Please note, this advice **does not** apply to non-elective surgery.

Onset of COVID-19 during recovery from an operation is likely to complicate the patient's recovery and prolong their hospital stay.

Staff are required to:

- Ask patients at the time of booking confirmation whether they meet the criteria for the 14-day self-isolation prior to their scheduled surgery.
- For patients who meet the criteria:
 - postpone surgery until the patient has completed the 14-day isolation requirement, if it will not significantly impact patient outcomes. Consultation with treating medical practitioners should be undertaken.
 - ensure the surgery is re-scheduled as soon as practicable after the 14-day isolation period
 - Remind the patient that if they develop respiratory symptoms or fever they should call healthdirect on 1800 020 080 or call their GP.

Outpatient clinics

Before attendance at outpatients

- Develop a process, prior to patient presentation, e.g. phone call, SMS to ask patients if they meet the criteria for the 14-day self-isolation prior to their scheduled outpatient appointment.
- If the patient meets the above criteria:

- consider alternative methods of conducting the appointment e.g. telephone or tele-medicine
- if it is not possible to conduct the appointment in an alternative way reschedule their appointment for as soon as possible after the 14-day isolation period, if it is medically safe for the patient to do so. Consultation with treating medical practitioners should be undertaken.
- remind the patient that they are to self-isolate at home for 14 days after they departed mainland China, or from their last contact with a person with confirmed nCoV while the person was infectious
- remind the patient that if they develop respiratory symptoms or fever they should call healthdirect on 1800 020 080 or call their GP.

During outpatient attendance

- Consider options to identify patients who meet the 14-day self-isolation at the hospital entrance or in the outpatient clinic area e.g. waiting room signage
- For patients who meet the criteria:
 - ask the patient to wear a face mask
 - ask the patient if they have any respiratory symptoms or fever
- For patients who meet the above criteria and who do not report any respiratory symptoms or fever:
 - the attending doctor should make a clinical assessment about the presence of respiratory symptoms
 - if no symptoms/signs continue the outpatient consultation as normal, with the patient wearing a face mask
 - encourage the patient to perform hand hygiene
 - remind the patient that they should continue to self-isolate themselves at home for 14 days after their travel, or their last contact with a person with confirmed nCoV while infectious
- For patients who meet the above criteria and who report respiratory symptoms
 - manage the patient in conjunction with the emergency department as per clinician guidance

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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