

Need an operation? Here's how COVID has changed surgery

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This year, COVID-19 has made decisions around surgery tougher than

ever for folks who may need one. But one major medical group can help provide some answers.

Top on their list: Is it safe to have [surgery](#) right now?

"It is very safe to have surgery, especially with all of the precautions in place," said Dr. Beverly Philip, president of the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA).

"Surgeons, physician anesthesiologists, and other providers caring for patients wear extensive personal protective equipment (PPE) and assess each patient to ensure they receive the safest and most appropriate care," she said in an ASA news release. "Patients should feel safe and secure that they can have surgery when they need it."

For the foreseeable future, it's likely that you'll need a negative COVID-19 test before your operation. Your doctor will tell how far in advance of your procedure to get tested.

If you require [emergency surgery](#) and test positive for COVID-19 or your results aren't available quickly, [health care providers](#) will perform the procedure, but will take extra precautions. Those include donning enhanced PPE and placing you in quarantine for recovery, the experts said.

But non-urgent surgery patients without [coronavirus](#) symptoms should have a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) COVID-19 test before their procedure, the ASA advised.

There's no evidence that either COVID-19 or the vaccine interferes with anesthesia. But surgery temporarily puts extra strain on your [immune system](#), so the ASA recommends waiting until you are fully recovered from COVID-19 or are fully immunized after vaccination before having

an operation.

If you've tested positive for COVID-19, you should wait between four weeks (if you had no symptoms or only mild symptoms) and 12 weeks (if you had been admitted to the [intensive care unit](#)) to have any surgery, the ASA recommends.

If you've been vaccinated, your surgery should be at least two weeks after your final vaccine dose, they noted.

If you're eligible for vaccination and are having non-emergency surgery such as hip or knee replacement, the ASA suggests that it may be wise to get vaccinated first. If you're not yet eligible for the vaccine, ask your health care providers about the best time to have such surgery.

Most facilities have added time between surgeries for increased cleaning, so your procedure may occur later in the day than it would have previously, or take longer to schedule.

More information: The American College of Surgeons has more on [COVID-19 and surgery](#).

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