



Elective Surgery Patient Information

What is elective surgery?

Elective surgery is a term used for non-emergency surgery which is medically necessary, but which can be delayed for at least 24 hours. Patients requiring emergency surgery will not be placed on the elective surgery list.

Elective surgery is usually performed in an operating theatre or procedure room under some form of anaesthesia by a surgeon. Elective surgery is different to cosmetic surgery, which is not performed in public hospitals.

Prioritising elective surgery in WA public hospitals

The prioritisation of elective surgery in WA is guided by the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, *National definitions for elective surgery urgency categories*. The objectives for this report is to facilitate:

- timely access to elective surgery for patients according to their clinical need
- use a consistent approach to clinical decision making
- support a consistent and transparent approach to national reporting for elective surgery performance across jurisdictions.

There are three clinical categories used nationally for classifying patients for surgery. Clinicians performing triage will allocate received referrals with one of the following urgency categories as outlined in the table below.

Category	Clinical description	Meaning
Category 1 – Urgent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the potential to deteriorate quickly to the point where it may become an emergency. 	Procedures that are clinically indicated within 30 days ¹
Category 2 – Semi urgent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes pain, dysfunction or disability. • Unlikely to deteriorate quickly. • Unlikely to become an emergency. 	Procedures that are clinically indicated within 90 days ¹
Category 3 – Non-Urgent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes minimal or no pain, dysfunction or disability. • Unlikely to deteriorate quickly. • Does not have the potential to become an emergency. 	Procedures that are clinically indicated within 365 days ¹

¹These definitions are based on the time frame in which the procedure is clinically indicated, as judged by the treating clinician. Public hospitals make every attempt to meet these timeframes, however patients requiring emergency surgery and require a hospital bed are given clinical priority.

As a principle for elective surgery, patients are treated in accordance with their urgency category, but within each urgency category most patients are treated in the same order they are added to the waiting list.

We will:

- ensure that you are referred to an appropriately qualified medical practitioner
- notify you of your placement within 10 days of being placed on the wait list
- notify you by telephone or mail when your operation date is scheduled and the requirement to attend any pre-admission clinics
- organise the shortest waiting time for your surgery at a public hospital nearest to you
- ensure your general practitioner (GP) has information about the referral processes, waiting times and best management for your condition
- provide surgery on the booked date and not cancel your admission on more than two occasions without good cause

Your commitment

As a patient on the elective surgery waiting list, you must:

- follow the procedures and advice given to you by the hospital, including information on how to stay as fit and well as possible for surgery
- advise the hospital of your acceptance of a proposed admission date when provided
- attend any pre-admission clinics arranged for you
- attend the hospital on the confirmed admission date
- attend any follow-up appointments after your operation

You must let the hospital know if:

- your contact details change, such as a change of address or phone number
- you no longer wish to have the surgery
- any other personal circumstances change that may lead to the need to cancel or defer your surgery
- you are on another public hospital waiting list for a different elective surgery procedure.

Failure to attend a scheduled appointment without prior notice and good cause may result in you no longer being listed on the waiting list and surgery not being offered. In this situation, you will be advised in writing that you have been removed from the waiting list. If you feel that a misunderstanding has occurred in this situation, please discuss with the hospital contact person advised in the letter you receive.

Your GP can help

It is important to keep your regular appointments with your GP while waiting for your surgery.

Your GP will:

- keep you fit and well while waiting for surgery
- help make contact with the hospital if there is any change in your condition while you are waiting for surgery

Unless you tell us otherwise in writing, information about your care and management will be shared with your GP while you are waiting for treatment, and after your surgery.