

Forwarded on behalf of Dr. Janet Kow, PHC Senior Medical Director Acute Care and Amanda Harvey, Corporate Director and St. Paul's Site Co-Lead.

*Please share with staff, medical staff, researchers and volunteers and post for those who do not have access to email.*



## March 16, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented challenge in the last 50 years of health care. As we enter a more rapidly growing phase of the epidemic, we need to be prepared to meet the additional demands on our health care system. Today, B.C. Minister of Health Adrian Dix directed health authorities to move all hospitals in the province to Outbreak Response Phase 2. This means we will not be undertaking elective surgeries although every effort will be made to prioritize urgent and emergency cases.

### **Lions Gate Hospital ONLY**

Due to evidence of spread of COVID-19 at Lion's Gate Hospital, Lion's Gate will only be performing emergency surgeries and cancelling all other non-emergency surgeries as part of our preparations to increase inpatient capacity.

### **Elective Surgeries Cancelled (All PHC and all other VCH Hospitals)**

PHC is prioritizing emergent and urgent patients for surgical procedures and cancelling elective surgical procedures. Every effort will be made to preserve urgent cases as well as emergency surgical cases. Patients will be triaged and prioritized so that only non-urgent cases that can be safely be delayed will be postponed.

This will enable us to prepare, redeploy and train essential services health care providers (surgeons, anesthesiologists, operating room nurses, etc.) to COVID-19 related critical care. The prioritization of surgical cases will also enable us to preserve health care supplies for patients and staff who need it most.

### **Reduce Non Urgent Ambulatory Care**

One of the principles guiding our COVID-19 risk-mitigation strategies is that of "social distancing". Large groups of people sitting or congregating together is being discouraged by public health experts. The waiting rooms in PHC's numerous ambulatory and outpatient care settings are especially risky. For that reason, PHC will reduce all its ambulatory clinics to emergency patients only over the next three weeks. Only emergency or urgent patients will be assessed. This step will help us reduce transmission of COVID-19. In the interim and for the

remaining emergency patients, we recommend to continue precautionary measures in outpatient settings, including:

- Discouraging any visitors to ambulatory care areas
- Screening all patients at arrival
- Following droplet and contact precautions
- Frequent cleaning

[Virtual and telehealth](#) care and consultations are being urged between patients and providers/clinics to manage patients' elective needs in the most effective manner for them and the health care system.

We continue to monitor the situation closely and review preparedness plans for all hospital sites to ensure that our health care system is able to accommodate the potential increase of inpatient activity due to the spread of COVID-19.

Please refer to our website <http://covid19.providencehealthcare.org/> which is updated 24/7, and also includes a detailed FAQ section. If you have questions please email COVID-19@providencehealth.bc.ca and we will attempt to respond to your question in as timely a manner as possible, and include the question and answer on the website for others to also read.