



PROTOCOL FOR ELECTIVE PROCEDURES DURING COVID-19

Utilizing guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Illinois Department of Health (IDPH), and the major professional gastrointestinal societies, as well as looking at the actions of local health systems, our team has compiled a plan for restarting elective procedures at Comprehensive Gastrointestinal Health. These plans and policies are subject to change with evolving research and guidelines.

The health and safety of our staff and patients is our highest priority. In order to do our very best to ensure the safest environment for all individuals who enter our office suite, it will require additional measures of care.

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL MEASURES YOU NEED TO TAKE:

- Grocery store and pharmacy trips must be completed before your nasopharyngeal swab testing (as you will need to self-isolate after the sample is collected).
- Nasopharyngeal swab testing 3 days prior to your procedure.
- Self-isolate after the nasopharyngeal swab sample has been collected.
- Wear a mask on the day of your nasopharyngeal swab testing and on the day of your procedure.
- Bring only one companion driver on the day of your procedure and ensure that they are wearing a mask too.
- Watch for the development of any concerning symptoms of COVID-19 and notify the office immediately.
- Follow your procedure instructions for additional details.

PREPARATION FOR YOUR PROCEDURE DAY

What will I need to do prior to coming for an elective procedure?

- Watch for any symptoms concerning for COVID-19 infection.
 - When you are scheduled for a procedure, the staff will inform you that if you develop any symptoms concerning for active COVID-19 infection, you should notify our team for guidance and NOT come to our office suite.
 - Concerning symptoms include:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Chest pain
 - Sore throat
 - Loss of sense of taste or smell
 - Muscle pain
 - Chills/shaking chills
 - Headache
 - If symptoms are present that are concerning for a possible COVID-19 infection, we will guide you to a testing center for appropriate care of symptomatic individuals.
- Undergo a nasopharyngeal swab test to assess for active COVID-19 infection.
 - Presuming that you remain without concerning symptoms, you will be scheduled for a nurse visit approximately 3 days before your scheduled procedure in order to be screened for active COVID-19 infection.

- Nurse visits will occur between 8:30 am and noon, 3 days prior to your scheduled procedure.
 - Monday procedure = testing the Friday morning prior
 - Thursday procedure = testing the Monday morning prior
 - Friday procedure = testing the Tuesday morning prior
 - Saturday procedure = testing the Wednesday morning prior
- When you arrive on the morning of your nurse visit for the nasopharyngeal swab testing, wait in your car in the parking lot.
 - The staff member performing testing will call your cell phone and instruct you to walk to the door located to the left of the revolving door in the circular driveway.
 - You must be wearing a face covering per the state of Illinois guidelines.
 - We prefer that you come unaccompanied, but exceptions can be made for young individuals or those with increased anxiety.
 - The staff member that will meet you at the door will be wearing personal protective equipment, including an n95 equivalent face mask and gloves, but we still encourage that you try to remain approximately six feet away from one another as much as possible.
 - You will be brought to our laboratory area and instructed where to sit.
 - The staff member will put on additional personal protective equipment and then have you removed your face mask so that they may collect the nasopharyngeal swab sample but putting a cotton tipped swab deep inside of your nose.
 - If you have a lot of mucus (“stuffy nose”) in your nasal passage, it can interfere with the test quality and you may have a tissue to gently clean the nasal passage prior to sample collection.
 - You will then let yourself out of the building.

How safe is it to come to the office suite for this testing?

- The laboratory area where your sample is collected will be occupied by the sole staff member collecting your test who will be wearing personal protective equipment during your entire interaction.
- The laboratory area is thoroughly cleansed in between each patient visit.
- The building itself is locked in compliance with the shelter in place order and only a limited number of building occupants are in their respective office suites on a given day.
- The building environmental services frequently disinfect the lobby doors and surfaces.

After the test sample has been collected, we strongly request you self-isolate until after the procedure is completed. So be certain to make trips to the grocery store and/or pharmacy for your procedure preparation BEFORE you have the COVID-19 nasopharyngeal swab performed.

INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 TESTING

Which laboratory and test will be utilized?

- We utilize test kits from a company called Genesis Laboratories based out of New Jersey.
- The testing method they utilize is a real-time RT-PCR in vitro diagnostic test for the qualitative detection of RNA from SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19).

When will I receive my test results?

- Test kits are sent via overnight Fed Ex to Genesis Laboratories in New Jersey.
- The typical turnover time is 24-48 after they receive the test.
 - However, there exists the possibility of delay if demands become significantly higher.
- Results are faxed to our office and then a staff member will call you with the results.
 - If your result is negative, continue to self-isolate prior to your procedure and follow your procedure preparation instructions that have been provided separately.
- We do not want anyone to start drinking their colonoscopy preparation solution until we are certain that the test results are negative. If you have not received confirmation of a negative test result by noon on the day before your scheduled procedure, call the office. If it is a weekend, ask to have the doctor paged.

How accurate are my test results?

- Unfortunately, no nasopharyngeal swab test is perfect for detecting active viral shedding of COVID-19.
- Nasopharyngeal swabs for RT-PCR are approximately 70% sensitive for diagnosing active COVID-19 infection.
- This means that about 30% of the time, a person with active COVID-19 infection may still test negative for the disease.

What if the COVID-19 nasopharyngeal swab is POSITIVE?

- We will cancel your elective procedure and reschedule for a future date when you have fully recovered.
- We will guide you on resources for additional care as needed.

If the COVID-19 nasopharyngeal swab is NEGATIVE, does that mean I am immune to COVID-19?

- No.
- Having a negative nasopharyngeal swab PCR test means that no active viral infection was detected, it does not confer any information about a prior exposure or your immune status to COVID-19.

ADDITIONAL TESTING AVAILABLE

How can I find out if I have already been exposed to COVID-19?

- A blood draw can assess to see if you have developed antibodies to the SARS-Cov-2.
- Our office collects the blood sample and then testing is performed by Quest Laboratories.

What will this antibody test tell me?

- Please keep in mind that these tests are brand new and research and time will ensure their accuracy and better help us to interpret the results.
- If the SARS-Cov-2 IgG antibody is NEGATIVE, this means that it is highly unlikely that you have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus >14 days ago.
 - However, it takes the immune system about 14 days to develop these IgG antibodies. If you were infected within the past 14 days, the test may be negative.
- If the SARS-Cov-2 IgG antibody is POSITIVE, this means that you may have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus >14 days ago.
 - You will need to have a nasopharyngeal swab to perform a PCR test to assess for active viral shedding (as discussed above, to assess for your ability to infect others).
 - NOTE: these antibody tests could be positive because of a prior exposure to a different strain of coronavirus other than COVID-19.

If the SARS-Cov-2 IgG antibody is POSITIVE, does that mean that I am immune to COVID-19?

- Unfortunately, the answer is not necessarily.
- It is not yet clear whether the presence of antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 implies that a person is protected from reinfection by this virus — that is, immunity.
- Given the emerging and dynamic nature of the pandemic, more clinical data is needed to determine if a recovered patient is susceptible to reinfection and how mild or severe such an infection might be. Therefore, continuing measures of social distancing and careful handwashing would be strongly encouraged.

PROCEDURE DAY INFORMATION

Do I need to bring anything special to the procedure day?

- Just a mask.
- Only one companion driver.
- Follow your procedure instructions for all other details.
- Arrive at the parking lot at your scheduled time and wait in your car. A staff member will call your cell phone when they are ready for you to come into the office suite.

What options will my driver have during my procedure?

- Your driver can choose to not come into the office suite.
 - They may drop you off and wait in their car in the parking lot.
 - They may drop you off and return to pick you up at a time specified by the staff (approximately 90 minutes after the time you were instructed to be dropped off).
 - You will need to provide a contact number for your driver, so that they staff can contact them when you are ready to be picked up.
- Your driver may accompany you into your pre-operative walled space and they must remain there for the entire duration of the pre-operative, procedural, and recovery processes.
 - They must be wearing a mask.
 - They will be screened with questions assessing for symptoms of active infection and they will have their temperature checked.
 - If they answer yes to the screening questions or have a temperature >100.0, they will not be allowed to enter the office suite and will have to remain in their car during your procedure.

How safe is it to have an elective procedure in the office suite?

- Safer than a trip to the grocery store!
- All staff have been screened for COVID-19 and they also undergo daily temperature checks and symptom questionnaires.
- This is when it is of great benefit to be a small practice outside of the hospital setting!
 - All non-essential staff continues to work from home, limiting the number of people in the office suite.
 - At any one time, there are only 7-8 staff members present from anesthesia and Comprehensive Gastrointestinal Health combined.
 - All staff will be wearing facial coverings and procedural staff will be wearing the "stronger" personal protective equipment (n95 equivalent). This protects not only the staff, but also the patients.

What about other patients and their rides?

- Again, because we are so small, there will be a maximum of three patients in our office suite at any one time.
- Every patient will undergo the nasopharyngeal swab testing, just like you have done.
- Every companion driver will have their temperature checked and a symptom questionnaire.
- Each patient has their own walled room that provides excellent physical and social distancing. Your assigned room will be where you get prepared for the procedure and also where you recover.
- Patients and their companions enter through reception and will exit directly from the procedural suite through a back door to the lobby.

What about disinfecting the office suite?

- This is where it is excellent news that we are a gastroenterology practice and have always excelled in routine aggressive disinfection between each and every patient.
- We have just added on extra cautious measures in spaces like reception and surfaces like door handles, again, between each and every patient.