

Planning for gender-affirming surgery in BC during the COVID-19 pandemic



NOTE: If you are travelling to **Montreal** for surgery, you need to review the **Considerations for travelling to Montreal during COVID-19: Primary Care Provider and Patient Check-List**. Contact transcareteam@phsa.ca for the most recent version.

1. Usually after a surgery, it is important to take several short walks a day to help with circulation and reduce the chances of developing a blood clot. **If you develop COVID-19-like symptoms or test positive after your surgery:**
 - you should not leave the house unless you are taking a short walk;
 - when you do take walks, you must: a) wear a mask; b) time your walk so that you are not around other people; and c) ensure you remain 6 feet from anyone nearby;
 - you should not leave the house if you develop any symptoms, except to access emergency health care.

Given the need to practice physical distancing and follow other public health recommendations during a pandemic:

- Can you get all your post-operative supplies ready at your house (or wherever you may be staying) before you have surgery?
- Can you get masks and other personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies ready before you have surgery?
- If someone will be helping out after surgery, have you talked about how you will each practice physical distancing, hand washing, and other public health recommendations for preventing infections (wearing a mask in public, etc)?
- Will you be in close contact with anyone in your home who might be immunocompromised or at heightened risk for complications related to COVID-19?

2. How will you access medical care?

- How will your surgeon see you for your post-operative visits? In-person or with virtual appointments?
 - If you (or someone in your household) develop symptoms of COVID-19 or test positive for COVID-19, will your surgeon be able to see you in clinic for post-operative care?
 - If not, where do they recommend you go?
- Is your primary care provider (GP or NP) seeing patients right now? Virtually or in-person?
 - If you (or someone in your household) develop symptoms of COVID-19 or test positive for COVID-19, will your GP or NP be able to see you in clinic?
 - If not, where do they recommend you go?

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- How will you get to your appointments or an emergency room (if needed)?
 - o Do you have a way to minimize using public transit (taxi, car ride from friend or family)?
- Do you have access to a device (cell phone, tablet, computer, etc) for virtual care/long distance appointments?
- Have you asked your surgeon and GP or NP what technology you need to set up a virtual appointment?

3. Are you aware of your local COVID-19 testing location(s)?

- You can call 811 for information about the nearest testing site to you. it is recommended to do this ahead of time so you can plan how to get there.

If you are travelling for surgery:

4. If you develop COVID-19-like symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, you will need to quarantine in your travel accommodations until all symptoms have cleared and you test negative (this could be 14 days or more). **Do you have the financial resources to:**

- Stay in your accommodations longer than planned?** Accommodation and meals would be at your own expense and could be around \$200/day (or more) and would not be reimbursed. Individuals with First Nations Health Authority may have some coverage: <https://www.fnha.ca/benefits/medical-transportation>
- Pay for any flights you need to re-book?** If your return flight needs to be rescheduled, this will be at your own expense. If you are travelling with Hope Air, they will be able to rebook for you if they are given as much notice as possible to ensure flight availability.
- Consider buying travel insurance?** Travel insurance may cover some costs associated with prolonged stay due to COVID-19, however you will want to confirm this coverage before buying. Manulife may cover some costs associated with COVID-19, while Blue Cross and Sun Life may not. You may already have travel insurance through any extended benefit plans or some credit card companies, but you should call and confirm.

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Depending on **travel restrictions at the time of your surgery**, you may not be able to travel with a companion, or have your companion visit you in the hospital. Your GP, NP or surgical team can help you determine what the current restrictions may be (if any) at the time of your surgery.

5. If you are travelling alone:

- Do you have concerns about traveling alone after your surgery?
- Are you worried about doing certain things without a companion? For example: traveling to the airport, help getting ready for surgery and recovering etc.
- Do you have a device (cell phone, tablet, computer, etc) or other ways to connect with your support people?

6. If you are travelling with a companion, it is recommend that they follow the most up-to-date public health guidance on travel restrictions and practice physical distancing, hand washing and other public health recommendations for preventing infections (wearing a mask in public, etc).

- Have you reviewed these recommendations with your travel companion?
- Have you reviewed the most recent policies for hospital visitors with you surgical team?

7. For a list of virtual peer supports and counselling resources contact transcareteam@phsa.ca