

## **Update FAQs & Talking Points for Patients and Team Members**

**(Effective 12/20/2021)**

**Background:** Central Maine Healthcare has been routinely testing patients for COVID-19 prior to elective procedures.

**New Process:** Regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status, all patients undergoing elective procedures requiring intubation or general anesthesia, procedures involving the upper respiratory tract and/or patient expected to be admitted to the hospital after the procedure will be required to undergo COVID-19 PCR testing no more than 96H prior to the procedure.

### **For Procedural Patients:**

- **Q: I am fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and scheduled for a procedure at CMMC. Do I need a COVID swab?**
- **A:** Yes. Regardless of vaccination status, fully vaccinated and non-symptomatic patients undergoing Day Surgery procedures requiring intubation or general anesthesia are required to undergo a **COVID-19 PCR** swab prior to the procedure.
- **Q: I tested positive for COVID within the last 90 days and do not have symptoms. Do I need a COVID swab?**
- **A:** No. As long as you are not presenting with any of the COVID symptoms and with a prior positive COVID test within the last 90 days, you do not need to be tested for COVID-19.
- **Q: Why do I need to be tested for COVID-19 if I am having general anesthesia?**
- **A:** Having general anesthesia requires the anesthesia provider to intubate you to help you breathe during the procedures. Intubation is an aerosol generating procedure (AGP). AGPs are defined as procedures that are performed on patients that are more likely to generate higher concentrations of infectious respiratory aerosols than coughing, sneezing, talking or breathing. Aerosols are smaller than droplets and may remain suspended in the air for longer periods of time. When inhaled by unprotected persons, they are a potential for disease transmission.
- **Q: I am a patient with a planned admission and I am fully vaccinated. Do I need a COVID swab?**
- **A:** Any planned in-patient admission regardless of COVID status will require a COVID-19 PCR swab 96H prior to the procedure date.

- **Q: I am a patient in need of a COVID swab, but I am not able to get my COVID swab done 72H before my procedure. What do I do?**
- **A:** An order for COVID-19 in-house test must be entered. The scheduler must schedule an appointment on SchedApp for the patient to be seen at PPTC and link the order with the appointment 48H-24H prior to the procedure date.
- **Q: I am a patient in need of a COVID swab, can I be swabbed on the day of the procedure?**
- **A:** We recommend that patients obtain their COVID swab prior to the procedure date to avoid delays and to ensure the care team has the COVID test results. If the results test positive, the procedure may be canceled. For patients unable to be swabbed within 72H prior to the procedure, an order for **COVID-19 in-house test** must be placed by the provider to be collected on the date of admission to the unit. The COVID swab will be performed by team members where the patient is admitted.
- **Q: Where do I go for my COVID-19 swab or other testing needs?**
- **A:** For COVID-19 testing/blood draws and/or EKG scheduled at the Preprocedure Testing Center (PPTC), please come to the 60 High St. hospital entrance. You will be greeted by a screener. You will be asked to sanitize your hands and wear a mask (if not masked). The screener will take your temperature and ask screening questions related to COVID-19 symptoms and exposure. Only patients and escorts who are screened negative for COVID-19 symptoms will be admitted to the department.
- **Q: What do I do if I have symptoms?**
- **A:** Stay home and contact your physician immediately if you have any of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle or body aches, vomiting or diarrhea, new loss of taste or smell. The provider will determine if we will proceed with surgery.
- **Q. Do I need to do anything special related to COVID 19 to prepare for surgery?**
- **A.** As soon as you have received confirmation of your procedure date, we ask that you follow self-quarantine guidelines, masking protocol and reducing any potential exposure to suspected or known COVID-19 individual until the date of your procedure.
- **Q. What can I expect when I arrive at the hospital for my procedure?**
- **A.** You will arrive at the 60 High St. hospital entrance and will be greeted by a screener. You and your escort (if accompanied) will be asked to sanitize your hands and wear a mask (if not masked). The screener will take your temperature and ask screening questions related to COVID-19 symptoms and exposure. Only patients and escorts who are screened negative for COVID-19 symptoms will be admitted to the department. Depending on the department, one

escort is allowed to be at the bedside until the patient is taken into the procedure room and then the patient will be asked to leave.

- **Q. What are you doing to minimize risk in surgeries—sanitizing or disinfecting?**
- **A: Both** We clean all surfaces and equipment between each patient using FDA approved cleaning agent which kills lots of bacteria and viruses including COVID-19. At the end of the day we utilize in our operating room UV light cleaning machine.
- **Q. What Personal Protective Equipment still needs to be worn by the healthcare team during any Aerosol Generating or Upper Respiratory Procedure?**
- **A.** Because testing gives us a good indication of whether a person is infected or not, but may not provide results with 100% certainty, Personal Protective Equipment, such as N95 Respirators, face shields or safety eye glasses, gowns and gloves are also worn by our healthcare teams.