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**Memorandum**

**TO:** All Health Care Providers and Health Care Facilities

**FROM:** Elizabeth Kelley, MPH, MBA, Director, Bureau of Health Care Safety and Quality  
James Lavery, JD, Director, Bureau of Health Professions Licensure  
George Zachos, JD, Executive Director, Board of Registration in Medicine

**DATE:** June 6, 2020

**RE:** Nonessential, Elective Invasive Procedures during the COVID-19 Outbreak

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to work with state, federal and local partners on the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2, and we continue to appreciate the essential role you have in responding to this evolving situation. This memorandum is effective June 8, 2020 and supersedes the [DPH memorandum issued May 18, 2020](#). All health care providers should continue to use their clinical judgment on a case by case basis and perform invasive procedures that must be done to preserve a patient's life and health. This memorandum outlines the conditions that must be met and the procedures that must be followed prior to a healthcare provider resuming non-essential elective invasive procedures and services, as authorized by the [Order of the Commissioner of Public Health Regarding the Scheduling and Performance of Non-Essential Elective Invasive Procedures](#), effective June 8, 2020.

Effective June 8, 2020, health care providers, including but not limited to acute care hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers, who attest to meeting specific criteria and public health and safety standards outlined in [DPH Phase 2 Reopen Approach for Acute Care Hospitals guidance](#) and [DPH Phase 2 Reopen Approach for Health Care Providers \(Providers that are Not Acute Care Hospitals\) guidance](#), as applicable, may incrementally resume non-essential elective invasive procedures and services. The criteria and public health and safety standards include and build upon all Phase 1 requirements. The attestation requires any healthcare provider that

resumes non-essential elective invasive procedures and services to establish and monitor patient volume in each facility, clinic, or office setting where such procedures and services are performed and schedule patient visits to ensure ongoing compliance with:

- 1) The public health and safety guidelines in Phase 1 Guidance (Section III. C.) including, but not limited to, standards related to PPE supply and use, restricting the number of health care workers in the treatment space to those individuals necessary to complete the service or procedure for the patient, screening patients in advance of a service or procedure, administrative and environmental controls that facilitate social distancing, such as minimizing time in waiting areas and minimizing contact between patients through scheduling; and
- 2) Ongoing compliance with CDC requirements<sup>1</sup> and other public health guidance regarding environmental infection controls, which include specific requirements to suspend the use of all examination, procedural, and surgical areas in-between procedures for a mandated timeframe necessary for sufficient air changes to remove air-borne contaminants<sup>2</sup>, prior to the thorough cleaning and disinfection of the room and equipment, as required in the Phase 1 Guidance.

As indicated in the [DPH Phase 2 Reopen Approach for Acute Care Hospitals guidance](#) and [DPH Phase 2 Reopen Approach for Health Care Providers \(Providers that are Not Acute Care Hospitals\) guidance](#), providers should postpone any non-emergent, non-urgent elective procedure or service if these safety standards cannot be met.

DPH recommends that providers at each hospital, ambulatory surgical center or independent practice use their clinical judgment on a case by case basis regarding any invasive procedures that must be done to preserve the patient's life and health. The scheduling requirements and restrictions do not apply to these procedures that, in the clinical judgment of the provider, cancelation or delay would adversely impact life sustaining care.

DPH defines nonessential, elective invasive procedures as procedures that are scheduled in advance because the procedure does not involve a medical emergency; provided, however, that terminating a pregnancy is not considered a nonessential, elective invasive procedure for the purpose of this guidance. The ultimate decision is based on clinical judgement by the caring physician.

Examples of nonessential, elective invasive procedures may include but are not limited to:

- Any procedures involving skin incision
- Injections of any substance into a joint space or body cavity
- Orthopedic procedures (e.g. hip or knee replacement)
- Endoscopy (e.g., colonoscopy, bronchoscopy, esophagogastric endoscopy, cystoscopy, percutaneous endoscopic gastronomy, J-tube placements, nephrostomy tube placements)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/environmental/appendix/air.html#tableb1>

- Invasive radiologic procedures
- Dermatology procedures (e.g. excision and deep cryotherapy for malignant lesions-excluding cryotherapy for benign lesions)
- Invasive ophthalmic procedures including miscellaneous procedures involving implants
- Oral procedures (e.g. tooth extraction)
- Podiatric invasive procedures (e.g., removal of ingrown toenail)
- Skin or wound debridement
- Kidney stone lithotripsy
- Colposcopy and/or endometrial biopsy

DPH strongly encourages all hospitals in Massachusetts to monitor the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) website and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for up-to-date information and resources:

- CMS website: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/EPRO/Current-Emergencies/Current-Emergencies-page>
- CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/index.html>

Additionally, please visit:

- DPH's website that provides up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Massachusetts: <https://www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus>.
- Massachusetts' reopening website: <https://www.mass.gov/reopening>
- Massachusetts' reopening website for Health and Human Services in Massachusetts: <https://www.mass.gov/lists/reopening-health-and-human-services-in-massachusetts>