

Sample Key Messages: Resumption of Scheduled Care

May 26, 2020

Note – Hospital communicators should adapt these for their own local context

- As you are probably aware, in March, hospitals were asked to put scheduled surgeries and procedures on hold to make sure they had enough room, staff and supplies to treat COVID-19 patients.
- Although necessary, we recognize too that this situation has been difficult and frustrating for patients whose care was postponed, and their families.
- It has also been challenging for health care providers eager to treat their waiting patients.
- It is welcome news that the Province is now giving hospitals and other health care providers the green light to assess readiness and slowly begin to schedule surgeries and procedures again.
- This will be a gradual process that will take weeks and months, and it will vary from region to region based on what is happening locally. There is no one-size fits all or “start” button for resuming this work across the whole province.
- Hospitals need to follow the Province’s [operational requirements](#) and are expected also to use its [framework](#) to plan and coordinate resuming scheduled care.
- Based on a number of factors, some hospitals may resume scheduled care sooner than others. For example, hospitals need to ensure they have a stable rate of COVID-19 cases, a stable supply of medication and personal protective equipment, and a plan in place for pre-operative diagnostic testing.
- They must also keep space and staff ready in case there is a new surge in COVID-19 patients.
- While hospitals want to provide care as soon as possible, the top priority is to make sure everyone – patients and staff – is safe in hospitals during this pandemic.
- When they visit, patients will have a different experience than they might anticipate and their cooperation and patience is appreciated. New precautions and systems could include changes to the physical environment and the pre-operative process.
- Work is already underway to strike the balance between slowly starting scheduled care and continuing to be ready for whatever COVID-19 might throw our way.
- Hospitals and their Ontario Health Regions are figuring out together where, when and how scheduled care can safely resume for waiting patients.
- Hospitals are working to determine the order to treat patients, based on clinical evidence and need. Since March, hospitals have also continued to treat patients requiring immediate (emergent or urgent) care.
- The Province’s framework is guiding hospitals as they navigate the next phase of care in Ontario during the pandemic. The clinical and other health care experts who created it have evaluated and drawn from the best available evidence to guide all hospitals -- and the health care system at-large.

- We recognize how difficult this waiting period can be for patients and their families and are working hard to be ready to resume scheduled surgeries and procedures as soon as it is safe to do so.