

I've been waitlisted for elective surgery – what happens next?



This information covers some of the frequently asked questions the NSW Health Surgery Access Line receives from people:

- who have already seen a specialist surgeon **and**
- whose surgeon has agreed they need an operation, **and**
- who have been added to a New South Wales (NSW) public hospital surgery waitlist.

If you are **not** yet on a waitlist, please read our fact sheet: [How do I join an elective surgery waitlist at a NSW public hospital?](#)

Or if you already know the date for your surgery, read our fact sheet: [I've been given a date for my elective surgery – what happens next?](#)

What should I do if my health condition gets worse while I'm waiting for surgery?

Talk to your GP if you have any concerns about your health, or if your condition changes or gets worse while you are waiting for surgery. Your GP may want to discuss your situation with your referred hospital or specialist surgeon.

If you need urgent medical care or are experiencing a medical emergency, call 000 or go to your nearest emergency department.

Why do I have to wait for my surgery?

There are many people who need surgery in NSW public hospitals. To help manage elective surgery waitlists, hospitals use a category system.

Your surgeon will decide if it's safe for you to wait for your surgery based on the urgency of your health needs. Your Elective Surgery Waitlist confirmation letter from the hospital will state which category your specialist has recommended.

The hospital will make every attempt to treat you within the time frame recommended by your specialist.

My hospital has offered me a different surgeon at a different hospital so that I can have my surgery sooner. Is this allowed?

NSW Health wants to make sure you can have your surgery as soon as possible.

As a public patient in a public hospital, the hospital may transfer your surgery to another NSW hospital or surgeon if:

- they believe it's better suited to your health condition or type of surgery, or
- your referring surgeon agrees to transfer your care, or
- it will reduce your wait time for surgery.

If you are a private patient attending a public hospital, you may still choose to have your specialist surgeon perform your surgery. However, being a private patient in a public hospital will not shorten your wait time for surgery.

Please note that your wait time is based on your condition.

My hospital has offered me a different surgeon at a private hospital. Will I have to pay for my surgery?

The NSW Government is working closely with private hospitals across the state to help reduce wait times for elective surgery. This includes offering some public hospital patients the option of surgery at a private hospital. If you are offered this option by your referred public hospital, you will not have to pay for your care.

Do some surgeons have shorter waitlists for their services?

Each NSW public hospital has a Patient Access Coordinator or Surgery Waitlist Manager who can answer any questions you have about wait times at that hospital. They can also advise which surgeons at that hospital (if any) have a shorter waitlist of patients.

For more information contact the Patient Access Coordinator or Surgery Waitlist Manager at your referred hospital.

Who do I contact if any of my personal details change?

It's important that your referred hospital can contact you by phone or letter if you are on an elective surgery waitlist.

You must notify the Admissions Office of your referred hospital if you move address or change your phone number or email address.

The hospital may have to remove you from the elective surgery list, in consultation with your treating doctor, if they are unable to contact you because you have not informed them of a change in your contact details.

Who do I contact if I no longer need or want surgery?

You may choose not to go ahead with your elective surgery if, for example:

- your health condition has fixed itself without the need for surgery
- you no longer want to have surgery
- you have found an alternative way to treat your health condition
- you have already had your surgery (for example, at a private hospital).

If you no longer need or want surgery, contact the Admissions Office at your referred hospital. You might be offered an opportunity to speak to a surgeon to discuss whether you need surgery or can manage your health condition without it.

For more information

If you need more information about your elective surgery, including wait times, please call the Admissions Office at your referred hospital.

[Contact your referred NSW hospital](#)