

Division of Gastroenterology Eastern Health

Date: March 23, 2020
To: Referring Physicians
Notice: Regarding Gastroenterology Consultations and Endoscopy Requests
From: Dr. Jerry McGrath, Head of Gastroenterology, Eastern Health

- Due to recent restrictions related to COVID-19 only “Essential Endoscopic Procedures” will be provided and Gastroenterology Consultations are restricted.
- Within Eastern Health all elective and non-essential endoscopic procedures stopped effective March 17, 2020.
- “Essential Endoscopic Procedures” are defined as:
 1. Acute Upper GI bleeding
 2. Acute Esophageal Obstruction – foreign bodies, food bolus, etc.
 3. Acute cholangitis/jaundice/biliary obstruction
- The following procedures have been suspended until further notice:
 1. Routine upper endoscopy and colonoscopy
 2. Colonoscopy for positive FIT
 3. PEG insertion
 4. Surveillance Colonoscopy
 5. Baseline Screening
- Endoscopy is a major diagnostic service. Many patients have urgent procedures because of suspected cancers, Inflammatory Bowel Disease, abnormal imaging etc. However, many of these *urgent* requests are ***not*** essential during a pandemic. Patients with endoscopically detected cancers, Inflammatory Bowel Disease or other lesions may not receive surgery, be started on immunosuppressants/biologics at this time or in the foreseeable future. An “Essential Procedures Policy” has been implemented to reduce any non essential exposure to the COVID-19 virus and to limit the spread of the virus. This policy will be regularly reviewed.
- These restrictions are similar to the restrictions in place for Diagnostic Imaging.
- **Do not refer patients for non-urgent cases.** Since pandemic measures have been in place last week Gastroenterologists have continued to receive referrals for Irritable Bowel Syndrome, GERD, dyspepsia, cancer screening etc.
- GI Physicians continue to be available for ongoing questions or virtual/telephone care of their chronic patients.
- If you have an Urgent/Essential matter to discuss there is a Gastroenterologist on call at both city hospitals and they can be reached through switchboard:
 1. General Hospital (HSC) 777-6300
 2. St. Clare’s Mercy Hospital 777-5000