



COVID-19 Information

We're halfway through August, two and a half years on from the beginning of the pandemic. By now, many of us have come across COVID personally or supported friends, family, colleagues and neighbours with COVID. Thankfully, the symptoms have proved to be mild and short-lived for most.

Fertility North continues in its commitment to delivering a high level of care whilst ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all our patients and staff. We have outlined here our latest updates, as the pandemic and the state government's response to it continues to evolve, and we greatly appreciate your ongoing cooperation and understanding.

CLINIC CONSULTATIONS

Doctors' Appointments

We are very happy to have started seeing patients in real life again, with new patient and gynaecology appointments resuming in the clinic.

At this stage, all review appointments with your Doctor remain via our telehealth platform, COVIU, but we hope to phase in face-to-face appointments within the next couple of months. Fertility North will still continue to offer Telehealth appointments to those that prefer this option.

Nursing Appointments

We are relieved to confirm that all Nursing consent and planning appointments have now resumed in clinic on an appointment basis. Please contact our friendly Admin Team to book in.

Please note that **all consent forms must be correctly completed** (signed and witnessed) prior to calling with Day 1 of your treatment cycle.

We encourage our regional and FIFO patients to discuss any concerns with regards to attending in-person clinic appointments, directly with a member of the Nursing team.

RESUMPTION OF TREATMENT AFTER INFECTION

How soon after having COVID is it safe to start fertility treatment?

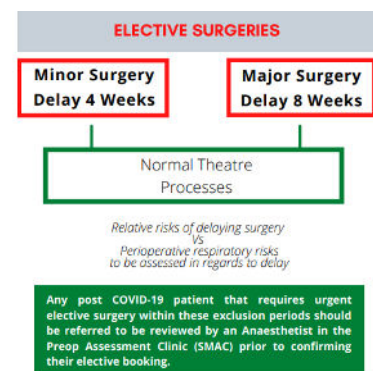
Because the impact of COVID on fertility is still unconfirmed, Fertility North recommend **waiting for a period of at least 4 weeks after recovering from COVID infection before starting fertility treatment.**

- Fresh IVF / ICSI cycles can commence as long as cycle day 1 falls 21 days after a positive COVID diagnosis, ensuring that 4 weeks elapses between diagnosis and intubation for egg collection (see Requirements for Surgery, below)
- FET cycles can commence with cycle day 1, following completion of mandatory COVID isolation period, as long as asymptomatic

Requirements for Surgery

COVID is now seen as an operative risk factor, and failure to allow adequate time for recovery following COVID-19 infection poses significant risks to patient safety.

The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) recommend that after COVID-19 infection, **elective minor surgery should be delayed for at least 4 weeks**, provided the patient has returned to baseline function and is asymptomatic.



References

- Australia. Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. 2021. Delaying Surgery for patients recovering from Covid - 19. A rapid review commissioned by RACS. 2021-04-23. RACS-Post-covid-delay-to-surgery-report.pdf (surgeons.org)
- Australia. Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists. 2022. Living guidance: surgical patient safety in relation to Covid - 19 infection and vaccination. anzca_pg68a_living_guidance_surgical_patient_safet.pdf



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Vaccination Requirements

With the lifting of government mandates for vaccination, Fertility North has now lifted the requirement for COVID vaccination prior to embarking on treatment.

In line with advice from The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG), the Australian Department of Health and the Fertility Society of Australia (FSA), Fertility North will continue to **recommend that all patients are vaccinated against COVID-19**. The vaccines have been shown to be safe, based on accumulated evidence from other countries around the world. Pregnant women who are unvaccinated and contract COVID-19 are more likely to suffer severe disease, premature labour and stillbirth.

You can find more information on the safety of vaccines via the following links:

[RANZCOG COVID-19 Statement](#)

[Joint Statement from RANZCOG and ATAGI](#)

[FSA - COVID vaccination and individuals who are trying to conceive or who are pregnant](#)

Clinic Entry Requirements

Anyone presenting to Fertility North will be required to:

- Ring the doorbell on arrival.
- Complete a COVID-19 declaration.
- Submit to a temperature check.
- Wear the N95 mask provided to you.
- Perform hand hygiene
- Practice social distancing

Whilst we will do our utmost to keep delays to a minimum, please recognise that these entry requirements may slow things down.

Your patience and understanding are appreciated.

SEMEN ANALYSIS OR CRYOPRESERVATION FOLLOWING INFECTION

How soon after having COVID is it safe to have a semen analysis or freeze my sperm for treatment?

Studies have shown compromised sperm quality following infection of COVID. However, no causality can be inferred from these studies due to limitations of their design. Andrology experts believe that the observed impact on sperm quality is likely due to immune response such as fever, rather than the infection itself.

Taking a conservative approach, our advice is to wait for 3 months following infection, before attending any semen appointment (either diagnostic or therapeutic). This is to allow freshly generated sperm to replace damaged sperm (if any).

Should you need to provide a sample for treatment prior to the recommended 3-months, a semen analysis (including Halosperm test) is required after at least 4 weeks post confirmation of infection. Therapeutic procedures (IUI, IVF, ICSI and sperm freezing) may take place once unaffected sperm quality has been confirmed.

If you provide a sample for diagnostic purposes within the 3 month period, there is a chance that your results may be impacted by COVID and a repeat analysis may be recommended.

The Healthy Male have put together a great resource regarding the impact of COVID on semen quality here: <https://www.healthymale.org.au/news/health-professionals-does-covid19-affect-male-fertility-semen-quality>

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this advice, please do not hesitate to contact the laboratory team.

I HAVE COLD OR FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS AND FEEL UNWELL, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Please DO NOT come to the clinic. Please give us a call so we can provide you with further instructions regarding your treatment. As always, we recommend you get tested (RAT or PCR) and isolate at home until your result is known.



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When you have your result, please advise the clinic so we can offer advice and guidance. If your result is negative, you will be able to attend the clinic and complete your treatment.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 WHILST UNDERGOING TREATMENT?

Unfortunately, a positive COVID-19 result will mean that your cycle has to be cancelled.

If you test positive prior to egg collection, your cycle will be cancelled and bulk-billed to Medicare.

If you test positive between your egg collection and embryo transfer you will not be able to proceed and your embryo will be frozen. In this case, your fresh cycle fees will still apply, however your subsequent frozen embryo transfer will be bulk-billed.

WHAT OTHER MEASURES HAVE FERTILITY NORTH PUT IN PLACE TO ENSURE PATIENTS ARE PROTECTED?

All Fertility North staff are vaccinated and are receiving their booster as they become eligible. Additional measures around the clinic include:

- All staff will wear appropriate PPE
- Minimisation of shared workstations and stationery throughout the clinic
- Increased frequency and enhanced cleaning measures

SUPPORT

We acknowledge that these continue to be challenging times, and that ongoing changes may present challenges to some.

Should you need additional support or guidance during this time, please do not hesitate to ask, our Team are here to assist you.

Other useful resources are listed below:

<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/>

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/covid-19-and-mental-health>

QUERIES AND FEEDBACK

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, requirements may change as we move forward and we are committed communicating these changes with you as soon as they occur and will continue to do our utmost to ensure your treatment remains uninterrupted.

We encourage you to keep in touch with your questions and feedback, as we work with you to ensure we continue to provide safe, high quality fertility and gynaecology care. You can access our Patient Feedback survey here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FertilityNorthPatientSurvey>

From each of us at Fertility North, thank you for your patience, understanding and support.

We look forward to supporting you through your fertility journey.