

COVID-19 & VACCINATION - ANAESTHESIA & SURGERY FAQs



Always ask your anaesthetist or surgeon before making any decisions based on the advice in these FAQs



Can I have a COVID-19 vaccine when I plan to have an anaesthetic?

- There is no evidence that COVID vaccines affect anaesthesia or that anaesthesia affects how well the vaccine works.
- Because surgery is stressful on the body and temporarily puts extra strain on your immune system, you should wait until you are fully vaccinated before proceeding with surgery wherever possible. If in doubt, check with your surgeon and anaesthetist.



Is it safe to have surgery and anaesthesia if I have been recently vaccinated?

- SASA and other professional societies recommend waiting at least 2 weeks after your final vaccine dose because:
- The vaccine will be most protective against severe disease.
- Your immune system will have had time to respond to the vaccine and settle before surgery.



Should I wait until I'm vaccinated before having surgery or anaesthesia?

- If you are eligible for vaccination and you are having non urgent surgery, it may be wise to get vaccinated first.
- If you are not yet eligible for the vaccine, talk to your surgeon or anaesthetist about the best time to proceed.



Is it safe to have surgery and anaesthesia after I've been infected with COVID-19?

- Yes. You can have surgery once you have fully recovered from COVID-19.
- Before having surgery, SASA recommends (wherever possible) that you should wait:
 - 7 weeks if you had no / mild symptoms.
 - 12 weeks if you needed oxygen or ICU.



What changes can I expect due to COVID-19 around my admission and surgery?

- Most facilities will require you to take a COVID-19 PCR test within 72 hours of admission. It is important to check with your surgeon and facility.
- During COVID surges, only emergency and urgent surgery may be permitted which may delay your planned date of surgery.
- You will need to wear a mask at all times in hospital.
- Visitor access may be restricted during the pandemic.



SOURCE: South African Society of Anaesthesiologists (SASA) – published dated 10 August 2021