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Brookings Health Lifts Restrictions on Elective and Outpatient Procedures

Health System Remains Ready for Medical Surge

Brookings, S.D. – April 30, 2020 –Brookings Health System announced today it will lift the temporary restrictions placed on elective surgery and outpatient procedures due to the COVID-19 virus. The decision follows the release of Governor Noem’s *Back to Normal* plan for the state. The health system will schedule non-high risk patients for as soon as Monday, May 4.

“This is great news for patients who have placed their care plans on hold due to COVID-19,” said CEO and President Jason Merkley. “Our team is ready to deliver safe care to all patients. We continue to follow all Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and South Dakota Department of Health safety guidelines.”

Safety protocols put in place regarding care include, but are not limited to:

- All individuals entering Brookings Health System facilities, including team members, will continue to be screened for COVID-19 symptoms.
- All individuals entering Brookings Health System facilities will be asked to don a cloth mask. Patients may bring their own mask or may opt to wear one supplied by the health system.
- All care team members will wear surgical masks and protective eye wear, as well as other necessary personal protective equipment (PPE), at all times when caring for patients.
- Visitors will still be prohibited. A support person will be allowed for surgical patients, delivering OB mothers; children under the age of 18; patients with confusion, altered mental status or developmental delays; and end-of-life patients.
- Six-foot social distances will be established in public areas such as waiting rooms.
- Extra cleaning and disinfection of high-touch, public surface areas will continue.
- Infectious patients will continue to be cared for in isolation, away from non-infectious patients.

In addition to the safety protocols, the health system remains prepared to cease non-essential procedures in the event a surge or peak of COVID-19 develops in the area.

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"We're able to lift restrictions due to the low COVID-19 transmission rate within our community," said Merkley. "However, our new normal is that we now live with the COVID-19 virus. As people resume activities, we may see a spike in the virus and we will always side on protecting our patients, healthcare workers and community by returning to more restrictive policies and protocols. Until a vaccine or cure is found, Brookings Health will remain prepared at all times to handle a surge and care for our community and surrounding area."

To remain prepared, Brookings Health will maintain a sufficient supply of PPE as well as other resources necessary to care for COVID-19 patients. In accordance with the governor's plan, Brookings Health will also reserve 30 percent of hospital beds to meet surge demand. In addition, the health system will collaborate with local clinics and the Department of Health to continually evaluate incidences and trends of COVID-19 cases within Brookings County and the surrounding area.

"Safety is our top priority," said Merkley. "Our services may look a little different in the new normal, but our commitment to our mission, to deliver high-quality, compassionate, personalized health care, remains the same."

Patients who wish to schedule their elective surgery or outpatient procedure should first visit with their appropriate ordering provider. Information on care safety can be found online at brookingshealth.org/SafeCare.

About Brookings Health System

Brookings Health System, located in Brookings, South Dakota, includes a 49-bed hospital, the 79-bed The Neighborhoods at Brookview nursing home, Brookhaven Estates senior living apartments, Yorkshire Eye Clinic & Optical, and medical clinics in Arlington, White and Volga, South Dakota. It is a non-profit, city-owned facility that offers the community a full range of inpatient, outpatient, emergency and extended care services. Brookings Hospital provides local access to doctors in Brookings and offers robotic da Vinci surgery and Mako robotic-arm assisted procedures, making it one of the premier rural community hospitals in South Dakota. For more information about the services offered at Brookings Health System, please call (605) 696-9000 or visit us on the Web at brookingshealth.org.

PHOTO: Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist Josh Klinkhammer visits with a patient prior to surgery at Brookings Hospital. Brookings Health System is lifting the temporary restrictions placed on elective surgery and outpatient procedures due to the COVID-19 virus. The health system will schedule non-high risk patients for as soon as Monday, May 4. Brookings Health will also remain prepared to cease non-essential procedures in the event a surge or peak of COVID-19 develops in the area.

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