



In-Office Exams & Procedures

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis issued a new [executive order \(2020-72\)](#) on March 20 that prohibits elective, medically unnecessary, non-urgent or non-emergency procedures or surgeries due to the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Based upon the FAFP's interpretation of the executive order, Florida's family physicians are still permitted to personally evaluate and treat patients with chronic and acute conditions, provide mental health services, women's health services, and even perform wellness exams that do not unnecessarily utilize PPE. It was also clarified that seeing patients for procedures which would otherwise require a patient to seek care in an emergency department (e.g., stitches or casting) can still be performed in a family physician's office. However, it is important that you develop appropriate protocols for patient encounters that fully engage the benefits of telemedicine to prevent any unnecessary exposure to COVID-19.

Specifically, procedures and surgery which are prohibited (unless if delayed it places the patient's health, safety, or well-being at risk) include elective or non-medically necessary surgical procedures and surgical procedures that can be postponed (examples may include some lens surgeries, orthopedic and cosmetic procedures, endoscopy, etc.). For more information on guidelines that can be utilized in making these determinations, physicians are encouraged to refer to the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services \(CMS\) recommendations](#).

Controlled Substance and Medical Marijuana Prescribing via Telemedicine

Controlled substance prescribing and medical marijuana certification rules for patients have been modified during the declared state of emergency. Florida Surgeon General, Dr. Scott Rivkees, issued an [Emergency Order on March 16](#) in response COVID-19 that permits the virtual visits **through April 8**, but may be extended. Specifically:

- **Controlled substances:** Family Physicians, APRNs, and PAs who are registered with the DEA as controlled substance prescribers can issue prescription renewals, via telemedicine without a physical examination, for existing patients for the treatment of chronic nonmalignant pain.
- **Medical Marijuana:** Virtual recertification also allowed for existing patients who have been diagnosed with a qualified condition by physicians qualified by the Florida Department of Health Office of Medical Marijuana Use (OMMU).

The emergency order also addresses the ability for health care professionals, advanced life support professionals, and basic life support professionals, holding a valid license in another state, territory or district to provide these services in Florida during the COVID-10 crisis, yet must be conducted within their scope of practice.