

Inclement Weather Frequently Asked Questions for Patients

In the interest of the safety and welfare of our patients, visitors, and staff, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center's clinics and offices may close due to inclement weather. We may delay opening of clinics and offices, or clinics may need to be closed early based on the current weather conditions. If you have a scheduled appointment during inclement weather conditions, please call ahead to verify if the office is open. Closure decisions regarding Walter Reed Bethesda's clinics and offices are made for public and patient safety, and they are not made lightly.

Walter Reed Bethesda's emergency services and inpatient services are always open and providing health care, regardless of weather conditions.

How will I know the hospital's operating status?

When is the hospital operating status published?

If the federal government is CLOSED, what does that mean for my scheduled clinic appointment or surgery on that day?

If the federal government is OPEN with DELAYED ARRIVAL, what does that mean for my scheduled clinic appointment or surgery?

When can I expect to be notified if my scheduled appointment has to be rescheduled?

My appointment is to be rescheduled due to inclement weather, but I have not received a telephone call. What should I do?

What if I have an urgent need and must be seen today?

What if I have an emergency and must be seen right away?

1. How will I know the hospital's operating status?

Walter Reed Bethesda follows the Office of Personnel Management's determination of the federal government's operating status. There are many resources for you to check the hospital's operating status.

- www.opm.gov
- OPM Status Line: 202-606-1900
- www.wrnmmc.health.mil
- Hospital Status Line: 301-319-8707
- Hospital Operator: 301-295-4000
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/WRBethesda>
- Facebook: <https://facebook.com/WRNMMC>
- Any Local Television and Radio Stations
- Nixle: Text **WRBALERT to 888-777** and receive up-to-the-minute alerts on news that may affect you. Opt-out any time. Standard rates apply.

2. When is the hospital operating status published?

Changes to the hospital operating status are updated by 5:00am on our public website at www.wrnmmc.health.mil and our social media sites. In case of potential delayed opening status and appointment cancellations, patients with early morning appointments or scheduled elective surgeries are encouraged to check the website before departing their residence.

3. If the federal government is CLOSED, what does that mean for my scheduled clinic appointment or surgery on that day?

All outpatient clinic appointments (except as noted below) and scheduled elective surgeries will be rescheduled. Clinic staff will contact patients to reschedule at the patients' earliest convenient time.

EXCEPTIONS include the following services which remain open at ALL times, regardless of the federal government operating status:

- Inpatient Care Services
- Emergency Room
- Obstetrics/Labor and Delivery
- Main Operating Room (scheduled Wounded Warrior and Emergency cases only)
- Laboratory, Radiology, Pharmacy (for inpatient and emergencies only)
- Inpatient Chemotherapy and Radiation Therapy
- Inpatient Dialysis
- Nutritional Services/Main Dining Room
- Patient Administration Services
- Command Duty Office

4. If the federal government is OPEN with DELAYED ARRIVAL, what does that mean for my scheduled clinic appointment or surgery?

Outpatient Appointments: In the event that there is a one-hour delay, all outpatient clinic appointments before 9 a.m., may be delayed or rescheduled. If there is a two-hour delay, all outpatient clinic appointments before 10 a.m. may be delayed or rescheduled. If appointments are to be rescheduled, patients will be contacted by clinic staff to determine the patient's next earliest convenient time to be seen. When the government is open with a delayed opening status, there is a potential of a delay in seeing patients at the scheduled times; patients may have to wait but will be seen on the day of the scheduled appointment. Patients are advised to check the Walter Reed Bethesda website or call (301) 319-8707 for hospital operating status before departing their residence.

Ambulatory Surgery Appointments: When the government is open with a delayed opening status, there is no anticipated change to patients who are scheduled for surgeries. Patients are advised to call (301) 295-2560 to confirm status before departing their residence.

5. When can I expect to be notified if my scheduled appointment has to be rescheduled?

Walter Reed Bethesda will make every effort to notify you 24 hours in advance of your scheduled appointment. At times, however, that may not be possible and the notice may be less than 24 hours. Affected patients will receive telephone calls by clinic staff and/or the hospital's automated telephone messaging system and our mass notification system (301) 319-8707.

6. My appointment is to be rescheduled due to inclement weather, but I have not received a telephone call. What should I do?

If you have not received a telephone call, the hospital may not have your current phone number. Patients can provide their most up-to-date contact telephone number 24/7 by calling Patient Administration at (301) 295- 2126.

Patients can call and reschedule appointments upon reopening of the federal government:

For primary care appointments:

(301) 295-0196 from 7:00am to 4:30pm, Monday through Friday.

For primary care and specialty referrals:

(855) 227-6331 from 6:30am to 6:00pm, Monday through Friday.

Patients are also encouraged to use Relay Health to contact their primary care clinic or TRICARE Online which are both available via the hospital internet 24/7 under *Appointment and Referrals*.

7. What if I have an urgent need and must be seen today?

When unexpected medical care is needed, especially after hours, on weekends or when the hospital is closed due to inclement weather, it can be difficult to know what type of care you need and where to go. Urgent medical care does not threaten life, limb or eyesight, but needs attention to prevent it from becoming a serious risk to health. Your primary care manager (PCM) is your best resource for deciding where and when to get care. Patients may first contact the appointment line at (855) 227-6331 to see if they can be seen by their PCM team. If you are unable to reach your PCM, you should call the Nurse Advice Line at 1-800-TRICARE (1-800-874- 2273) Option 1, to obtain a referral to go to a nearby urgent care center.

8. What if I have an emergency and must be seen right away?

Emergency care is defined as a sudden, unexpected, acute medical condition or the worsening of a condition that poses a threat to life, limb or sight and requires immediate treatment. If such care is needed, patients should go to the Walter Reed Bethesda Emergency Department which is open 24/7, 365 days a year.

If patients cannot get to the Walter Reed Bethesda Emergency Department, patients should call 911 or immediately go to the nearest emergency department.