

HEALTH: SHORTER WAITING TIMES

Building Better Public Services



More operations, less waiting

Patients have a much better chance of recovering and getting on with their lives when they are diagnosed and treated, and return home in a timely way.

National will continue to deliver more operations, faster treatment, and a better chance for a healthier life. We will continue to focus on better, sooner, more convenient healthcare for all New Zealanders.

Improving quality in our health service

Only a few years ago, it was increasingly difficult to get elective surgery for essential operations, such as hip and knee replacements, cataract removal, or gall bladder removal. People were waiting days to be seen in emergency departments. Many cancer patients had to fly to Australia for vital radiation treatment.

Despite difficult economic times, our careful economic management and focus on efficiency has meant District Health Boards are now providing more care sooner, and significantly improving patient services in our hospitals.

More patients are receiving elective surgery and getting to see hospital specialists faster. Our target for shorter stays in emergency departments means faster care for thousands of patients with urgent injuries and needs. All cancer patients ready for radiation treatment are receiving it within the world gold standard of four weeks.

National will keep increasing elective operations, reduce waiting times, and deliver faster, more convenient healthcare for all New Zealanders.

“National will provide even more elective surgery. Our goal is that all patients booked for elective surgery will wait no more than four months. We will extend the four-week maximum waiting time target for cancer radiation treatment to include chemotherapy. And we will reduce waiting times for important diagnostic tests and further reduce waiting times in emergency departments”.

Key facts

More elective operations



500 extra patients a week, or 27,000 a year, are now getting elective surgery – a 22% increase since 2008.

Less waiting in emergency departments



A record 92% of emergency patients are being treated, admitted, or discharged within six hours.

Less waiting for cancer patients



Waiting times for patients ready for cancer radiation treatment have been reduced to just four weeks.

National has...



Boosted health funding

- ✓ Increased spending on the public health service by \$1.5 billion over three years, despite some of the toughest financial times in our history. We will continue to work on getting value for money.
- ✓ 800 extra doctors and 2000 extra nurses in public hospitals since late 2008.



Lifted performance in District Health Boards

- ✓ Introduced new health targets so District Health Boards (DHBs) can focus on patients and care. DHB clinicians and management have responded magnificently to the Government's targets.
- ✓ Published DHB performance against the National Health Targets on a quarterly basis.
- ✓ Increased amounts of same-day surgery and minor surgery in GP clinics to improve patient convenience.
- ✓ Improved efficiency to free up money and time, and provide better care for patients. The *Releasing Time To Care Programme* has significantly increased the amount of time nurses spend on direct patient care. It is now being used in 100 wards around the country.
- ✓ Introduced the *Productive Operating Theatre Programme* from the UK's National Health Service. This reduced delays and the number of cancelled operations, and increased the number of surgeries.



Focused on specialists

- ✓ Made increasing access to specialists a priority.



Improved cancer radiation treatment

- ✓ Funded 10 new linear accelerators for better, sooner, cancer radiation treatment.
- ✓ Reduced waiting time to world-best standards.



Built dedicated elective surgery theatres

- ✓ Built four dedicated elective surgery theatres at Greenlane Hospital.
- ✓ Approved dedicated theatres at North Shore and Waikato hospitals.

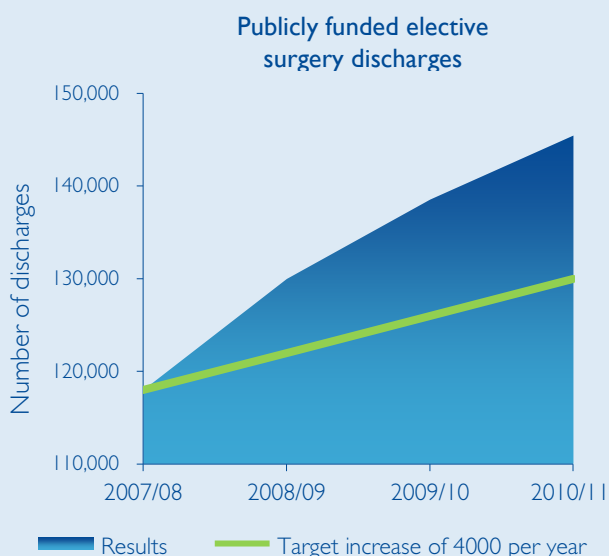
More dedicated elective surgery theatres means acute cases don't disrupt booked operations. This leads to more elective operations and a better quality of life for more people.

Our results so far

We're making each health dollar go further through a focus on efficiency and less bureaucracy.

Substantially increased elective operations

- 60,000 extra patients have received elective surgery over the past three years. This includes:
 - 23,000 more operations for people aged over 65.
 - 3100 more operations for children aged nine and under.

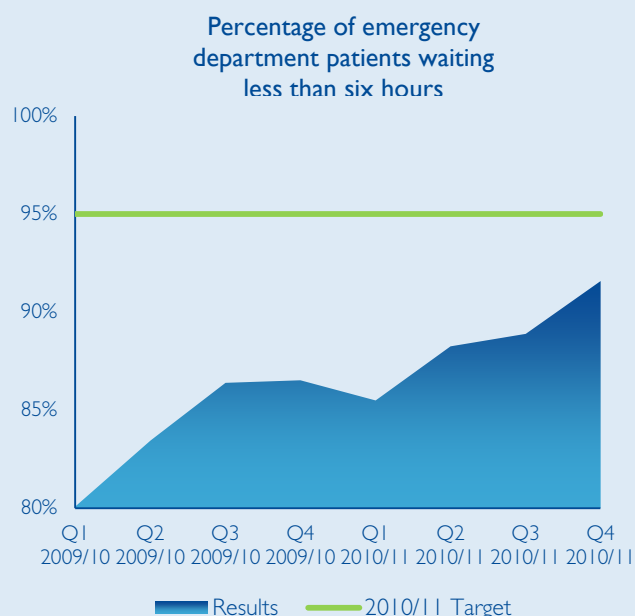


Less waiting for cancer patients

- Patients needing, and ready for, radiation treatment are getting it in the world gold standard of four weeks.
- No patient has had to travel to Australia for cancer radiation treatment since late 2008.

Less waiting for emergency patients

- 92 per cent of patients have been treated, admitted, or discharged from emergency departments within six hours.



Boosted specialist assessments

- 106,000 more patients have had medical or surgical specialist appointments over the past three years.

What we will do next...

1. Reduce waiting for elective surgery

→ Ensure all patients booked for elective surgery receive it within no more than four months by the end of 2014.

More timely elective surgery often means less pain and anguish for patients and their families. Reduced waiting also means a quicker return to normal life, including getting back to work. Long waits undermine confidence in our public health service.

Currently, around 80 per cent of patients get the elective surgery they need within four months, and 91 per cent within six months.

National will shorten the wait-time goal to no more than four months without culling patients off waiting lists.

We can achieve this through maintaining the current growth in elective surgery volumes.

We will continue to grow the number of elective operations to allow for population growth and ageing.

→ Make sure patients needing a specialist appointment are seen within no more than four months by the end of 2014.

A record 145,000 patients received elective surgery in the past year –27,000 more than under Labour.

We will provide \$12 million a year to boost elective surgery, support these changes to waiting times, and continue the excellent progress our public service is making to increase elective operations.

Funding will come from annual increases in the health budget, and DHBs will continue to make better use of their resources to support these new targets.

All patients to get elective surgery within:	Target date
Six months	Mid 2012
Five months	Mid 2013
Four months	End of 2014

→ Increase the number of patients getting elective surgery by at least 4,000 a year.

This is one of the Government's six health targets and will help support the increased service needed to reduce waiting times further.

More dedicated elective theatres will support more operations and shorter waiting times. Surgery will not be disrupted by acute cases and accidents. DHBs are expanding the "Productive Operating Theatre" initiative.

2. Reduce waiting for emergency patients

→ Further reduce waiting in emergency departments (EDs).

Emergency Departments are a barometer for how well a whole hospital is working. An efficient hospital means faster access to tests and beds, and patients getting back home as soon as they are ready.

Under the previous government, some people waited days to be seen.

Under National, 92 per cent of all patients are seen, treated, or discharged from our emergency departments within six hours.

We will work to meet the National Health Target of 95 per cent by 30 June 2012.

DHBs will continue to fund these improvements from within their budgets.

3. Reduce waiting for cancer patients

- Further reduce cancer treatment waiting times.

National will expand the four-week maximum waiting time target for radiation treatment to include chemotherapy treatment.¹

Considerable progress has already been made towards this objective over the past year.

This will be provided within existing DHB budgets.

4. Reduce waiting for important tests

- Reduce waiting times for important diagnostic tests such as CT scans, MRI scans, angiograms, and colonoscopies.

Patients are often referred to a hospital specialist before they can get an important scan or test.

This means waiting, in some cases up to six months, for an appointment to see the specialist before the patient is even referred for a test or scan. That often means even more waiting.

Under National, more DHBs are letting GPs refer patients directly for diagnostic tests like MRIs and CT scans. Direct referral from a GP means patients can get these tests sooner, meaning faster diagnosis and ultimately, better, sooner treatment.

National will work with health professionals to establish new maximum waiting times for diagnostic tests like MRI scans, CT scans, angiograms, and colonoscopies. England and Canada use maximum waiting times for these tests. Currently there is no national system for monitoring waiting times for these tests.

We'll provide \$4 million from the annual increase in the health budget to fund the first stage of better, sooner access to important diagnostic tests.

Labour would take New Zealand backwards

A return to Labour means more bureaucracy, more committees, endless visions that never deliver, and fewer Kiwis getting operations.

Under Labour:

- ✗ Real access to elective surgery was cut.
- ✗ Access to Specialist Assessments was cut.
- ✗ Some people had to travel to Australia for cancer radiation treatment.
- ✗ 30,000 patients were culled off hospital waiting lists.
- ✗ Labour is proposing to put less emphasis on the emergency department, cancer and elective services. Labour has criticised our work to improve hospital waiting times.

Patients can't afford another dose of Labour.

¹ Similar to wait time targets in England and Ontario