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Rome — June 6, 2023

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Pope Francis briefly went to Rome's main hospital on June 6 for tests and returned to the Vatican, two months after he was hospitalized with an acute case of bronchitis.

The Vatican spokesman, Matteo Bruni, said the pontiff underwent "some clinical examinations and returned to the Vatican before noon" from the Gemelli hospital.

Witnesses at the Vatican's Perugino gate, one of the main entrances to the city state, told The Associated Press that Francis greeted guards as he usually does before returning to his residence.

Francis, 86, spent three days at the Gemelli hospital in late March. Initially, the Vatican said he had gone in for scheduled tests, but the pontiff later revealed he had felt pain in his chest and was rushed to the hospital where bronchitis was diagnosed. He was put on intravenous antibiotics and was released April 1, quipping that he was "still alive."

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The Argentine pope had part of one lung removed when he was a young man. He also suffers from sciatica nerve pain and has been using a wheelchair and walker for more than a year because of strained ligaments in his knee.

Francis has had a packed schedule of late, with multiple audiences each day. The Vatican has recently confirmed a travel-filled August, when the Holy See and Italy are usually on vacation, with a four-day visit to Portugal the first week of August and a similarly long trip to Mongolia starting Aug. 31.

In a sign that the trips were very much on, the Vatican on June 6 released the planned itinerary for Francis' visit to Portugal for World Youth Day events from Aug. 2-6. The itinerary confirms a typically busy schedule that includes all the protocol meetings of an official state visit plus multiple events with young people and a day trip to the Marian shrine at Fatima.

Francis' next public appointment, if confirmed, would be his weekly general audience on June 7 in St. Peter's Square.