

# Patient Information Leaflet

## Fast track referral to Colorectal Unit

### **Why have I been referred?**

Your GP has asked us to look at the problems you are having with your bowels. These might be things like bleeding, changes to how often you go for a poo, tummy pain or weight loss. For most people this will not be anything serious. However, they can sometimes be the first sign of a more worrying condition such as cancer.

### **What is a fast track referral?**

To look into these changes as quickly as possible your GP can refer you on a 'fast track'. This will mean that you can have the right tests quickly. This is also called 'two week wait' or 'straight to test'.

### **What is the rush?**

All patients should be seen or have correct tests within two weeks of being referred. This helps to ensure quick access to tests that, for most people, will rule out any worrying cause for the symptoms.

It is important that you are able to have the tests within two weeks. It is also important that you attend any appointments.

### **What is special about 'fast track' referral?**

You may not need to attend a clinic first. Some tests can be arranged straight away based on the information given to us by your GP. We call this fast track referral straight-to-test.

For example, if you are over 50 years old and have bleeding from your bottom, we would arrange a test called a colonoscopy within two weeks of getting the referral from your GP. This would mean you would not have to come to clinic first. There is more information about a colonoscopy in this leaflet.

You can bring someone with you to your appointment. This means that you will have a diagnosis very quickly. For most people we can reassure them there is nothing seriously wrong straight away.

Not everyone is suitable for straight to test. We will see some patients in the clinic and then arrange whatever tests are needed.

## What tests might I have?

There are four possible tests:

- Colonoscopy
- Gastroscopy
- CT Colonography
- CT scan

One or more might be arranged for you, depending on the information we have about you. We request your help so we can arrange the right tests quickly.

- **Colonoscopy**

This is an examination of the colon (large intestine) using a thin tube with a camera. You would need to take medication to empty the bowel before this. You will be given information on how to prepare for this.

You may need medication that would help during the procedure. If so, you will need to have someone to take you home.

A colonoscopy is a very good way of looking at the bowel. We can also remove polyps and take samples at the same time. A polyp is a common small growth in the bowel.

- **Gastroscopy**

This is an examination of the stomach. If you have a lack of iron in your blood, we often look in the stomach as well as the colon. This is to rule out ulcers and cancer. It is a quick test, and if you are also having a colonoscopy, it is usually done during the same visit.

- **CT scan**

This is a body scan that examines the chest, tummy, and pelvis. Normally you have an injection in the arm to help highlight parts of your body like the liver and kidneys. The CT scan can also look at the bowel, but CT Colonography is slightly better.

- **CT colonography**

This scan is done when a patient cannot have a colonoscopy and gives us similar information.

During the scan, a small tube is inserted a short way into the bottom. Air is then sent through the tube to inflate the area while the images are taken.

You may need to take medication to empty the bowel beforehand. You will be given information on how to prepare for this in advance.

## What happens if the tests are normal?

Our main aim is to rule out cancer. For most people, the tests will be normal or show another condition that is not cancer.

If you have a colonoscopy and/or gastroscopy, you will be told the result on the same day. You will be given a copy of your test results on the day.

We will always write to you later to confirm the outcome of the examination and results of any samples taken. Your GP will then be able to treat you or can refer you on to a clinic for treatment.

### **What happens if cancer is found?**

If we find something worrying or signs of cancer, the fast track referral means that we can find this out quickly.

Usually, further tests are needed before we can decide on the best treatment. These will be arranged very quickly. Our nurses will help and support you through this.

You will be referred to a consultant experienced in treating the type of cancer found. They will talk over the results of your tests and explain what treatments are available. They will help you decide what treatment to have.

### **What happens now?**

Once we get the referral from your GP, we will look at it closely and work out the best way forward.

You will then be contacted to arrange one or more of the following:

- A colonoscopy (sometimes with a gastroscopy)
- A CT colonography or a CT scan
- A clinic appointment

Please be as flexible as you can to help us arrange the tests quickly and efficiently. We are here to help you through what may be a stressful time.

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