

Referral to hospital

A guide to referral and waiting times

This information sheet tells you about what happens when your doctor makes a hospital referral for you. It covers waiting times, changing appointments and who to contact for more information.

Making a referral

If the doctor is referring you to hospital, she or he will contact the relevant hospital department shortly after they have seen you. At this point, it is really important to make sure that the practice has your current address and phone number, so that we can pass on the contact details to the hospital.

From this point onwards, the hospital will be dealing directly with you, usually by letter. Make sure you ask the doctor which department and which hospital you are being referred to in case you need to get in touch with them later on.

Waiting times

The hospital department will try to make your waiting time as short as possible. The length of time you have to wait will depend on your condition and the level of demand for the service.

You should receive an appointment letter or a letter asking you to phone for an appointment within 16 weeks of being referred.

They will send you an appointment as soon as they can. Most people start treatment within 18 weeks of the initial referral.



Your appointment

You should be given seven days notice of your appointment.

What to do if you can't make your appointment or have a query

Please contact the department, using the phone number on your appointment letter, as soon as you can. Then they can give your appointment to someone else and agree a more suitable time with you.

Turning down appointments

Please remember that if you turn down two reasonable offers of appointment, the hospital may send you back to your GP and your waiting time will start again.

Going on holiday?

If you are waiting to hear about an appointment and you are about to go on holiday, please let the hospital know when you will be away. This allows them to make sure they don't send you an appointment for while you are on holiday. Again, use the contact details on your appointment letter.

Questions to ask the Doctor or Nurse

We think it is a good idea for you to ask these 4 questions before any test, treatment or procedure.

- What are the **Benefits**?
- What are the **Risks**?
- What are the **Alternatives**?
- What if I do **Nothing**?

Test / Scan Results

These results are received and interpreted by the hospital doctor who ordered the test.

Queries about hospital investigations should be directed to the Consultant secretaries at the hospital.

Worried about how to get to your appointment?

If you need more information about anything to do with your appointment – for example, how to find the department, transport, access – please phone the hospital using the phone number in your appointment letter.

What to do if the hospital doesn't get in touch after 16 to 18 weeks

You can phone the hospital department concerned to see what's happening with your referral. Here are some useful contact numbers:

- Eye Pavilion – 0131 536 9320
- Lauriston Buildings – 0131 536 1000
(for Orthopaedics, Dermatology, Ear Nose & Throat)
- Roodlands Hospital – 0131 536 8300
- Royal Hospital for Sick Children & Young People - 0131 536 1000
- Royal Infirmary – 0131 536 1000
- St John's, Livingston – 01506 523 000
- Western General Hospital – 0131 537 1000
- Chalmers Sexual Health Clinic - 0131 536 1070
- Physiotherapy Services Tollcross – 0131 537-8673
- Mental Health Services – 0131 537 8673
- Lothian Stop Smoking Services – 0131 537 7154
- East Lothian Community Hospital – 0162 0642700

These are general switch board numbers so you will need to tell the operator which department you were referred to, for example, orthopaedics, urology, cardiology etc.

Please avoid making an appointment with your GP about your referral unless your condition changes. It is normally best to enquire about the progress of your referral with the hospital department directly.

Thank you very much.