

CRAWLEY DOWN HEALTH CENTRE

My referral and beyond - what happens after I have been referred?

9 out of 10 of all NHS contacts take place in primary care, your GP surgery. Your GP, a general medicine practitioner, is a specialist in family medicine. They will deal with most ailments, prescribing medication and generally guide patients through the medical circumstances they face. Every so often it will be necessary to refer patients to a specialist in a particular field of medicine. This may be for an

- 1. Investigation that cannot be done in primary care and/or diagnosis,*
- 2. Opinion on your condition from a Consultant and/or treatment,*
- 3. Advice and-or reassurance for the patient from a Consultant or community based service.*

A referral is sent to the specialist service. Patients have the right to choose which hospital or clinic they are referred to as long as it is offering a suitable treatment that meets NHS standards and costs. This information leaflet is to try to help you achieve the best outcomes for you from this process.

Services and specialist hospital departments vary in their approach to booking appointments. Patients may receive a phone call or letter within 2-4 weeks to which they have been referred informing them of the appointment date and time. This may be accompanied by information about what will happen during and after your first appointment. Once the referral has been sent by the practice patients are under the care of the hospital (secondary care), and no longer the GP for this condition, and tests and investigations required by the specialists must be ordered and done by the service and the appointments sent to patients. Usually there is a strict time frame to respond so it is essential that you read the letter carefully and respond appropriately.

GP practices receive hospital correspondence within 2-3 weeks after your visit and test results are always sent to the specialist who requested the test, not your GP. Once correspondence has been received by the practice GPs may have to query certain points mentioned in the letters, for example, sometimes treatments, tests or onward referrals are recommended that can only be or are best initiated by the specialist rather than the GP.

It is important that you attend your appointment for your health and wellbeing. Patients are advised that it is their responsibility to make every effort to attend their specialist appointment or liaise with the booking administrator directly if changes are required as this may otherwise lead to a delay in their being seen. Any blood tests the specialist requests must be done by the hospital **not** the GP surgery.

Patients who do not attend their appointment waste valuable NHS resources and can delay other patients from being seen.

Frequently Asked Questions & Useful Contact Numbers

What should I discuss with the GP about my referral?

Your GP should have discussed with you and/or your carer why the referral is necessary and what the expected outcomes are. Please make the doctor aware of any specific needs e.g. carer, social issues, disability etc. It is important that the details about your address and telephone number(s) are correct.

I have to be referred, what happens next?

It usually takes up to 3 working days for the referral letter or form to be prepared and signed by the doctor. Where a referral is urgent, these are done and sent on the same day.

When am I likely to get my appointment?

The services you have been referred to are obliged to see you and offer treatment within 18 weeks unless you choose to wait longer or it is clinically appropriate that you wait longer **AND IN THE CASE OF SUSPECTED CANCER REFERRALS, TO SEE YOU WITHIN 2 WEEKS**. Please contact the service you have been referred to as soon as you experience a delay.

What if I do not receive an appointment?

If you do not receive anything in 3-4 weeks then you can initially contact the hospital or community service you have been referred to as per the list of telephone contact numbers overleaf.

What information about me is shared with the hospital?

The referral will include the reason, your name, address, date of birth, NHS number, telephone number, past medical history, current medications, allergies or sensitivities, details of investigations or tests that have been taken and the results and possible expected outcome(s).

Will the outcome of my consultation and all my test results from a specialist be available for me to discuss with my GP?

Often letters back from specialist services can take up to 2 weeks to reach your GP. Sometimes not all test results are sent back to your GP and it is worth asking our reception team whether results have been received before making an appointment. Please note that some specialist results are best interpreted by the specialist themselves and you should have an opportunity to discuss these with the specialist instead of your GP.

What else is useful to know?

The specialist service has to provide you with the following:

- ✓ A prescription or enough medication for 7 days or until the surgery has received the information
- ✓ A Sick or Fit Note (Med3) you may require – remember, you under their care not the GP's
- ✓ Follow up appointments you may need to achieve best possible outcome.

I have been referred for a test, when can I expect the result?

Routine blood tests - up to 3 days (some specialist tests will take longer)

Urine and stool results - up to 5 days

Ultrasound scans - up to 3 days

All other tests - you will be told how long you should expect to wait for results

What if the outcome is not what I expected?

If at any stage you are not sure as to what the next steps are in your care following a hospital / specialist or other professional consultation you should in the first instance discuss this with that health professional.

If you still do not feel the outcomes or experience of the hospital or community service is not what you expected, then you should let us know or discuss again with the doctor who referred you. This is important as we would want to make sure that you are receiving the best care at all times and we may need to help you achieve this. You may not need an appointment for this, the doctor will respond to your message by calling you back.

Patients should **always** contact the hospital directly to raise any queries or difficulties they encounter. Contact details can be found on your hospital correspondence or their website. Some general telephone numbers are listed below. Any complaints must be directed to the hospital Patient Advisory Liaison Service (PALS), details of which can be found on the relevant hospital website.

Telephone Numbers

Queen Victoria Hospital 01342 414000

Crawley Hospital 01293 600300

East Surrey Hospital 01737 768511

Maidstone and Tunbridge

Wells Hospital 01892 823535

Pembury Hospital 01892 823535

BSUH hub for Brighton and Princess Royal – 0300 303 8360

Princess Royal Hospital 01444 441881

The Royal County Hospital

Brighton 01273 696955

Brighton General Hospital 01273 696 955

Worthing Hospital 01903 205111

St George's Hospital Tooting 020 8672 1255

One call (district nurses) 01293 228311

MSK Service 0300 303 8063

Email: brighton.mskpartnership@nhs.net

Time To Talk 01444 251084