

# Fast Track Referrals

## during the Covid-19 pandemic

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

A fast track referral happens when a GP has concerns that a patient's symptoms might suggest cancer.

They make a referral to the hospital and an appointment to see a specialist is arranged **within two weeks**.

The hospital contacts the patient by telephone to schedule the appointment or any tests that need to be done.

### What will happen during the first contact with the hospital?

During your first contact with the hospital, the next steps will be discussed with you.

These could cover information about any tests you may need and include scheduling them.

The specialist may need you to go to the hospital for a test or they may decide it is more appropriate to delay – the decision will be made taking your overall safety and health into consideration.

If an appointment with a specialist is arranged, it is likely to be a **telephone call** or **online appointment** (if the hospital offers virtual consultations). Please tell your GP if you are unable to manage a telephone call or online appointment.

You may be offered an appointment to see the specialist at the hospital if it is decided you should be seen in person.

The hospital will send you confirmation of your appointment or any preliminary tests.

If you do not receive this information or have any further questions, please contact the GP who referred you.

**During the Covid-19 pandemic fast track referrals are still essential but they may be managed differently so please read this information carefully.**

You have recently discussed symptoms you have with your GP. They feel your symptoms should be investigated by a hospital specialist as soon as possible so the cause can be diagnosed quickly.

They are concerned your symptoms could suggest cancer but it does not mean you have cancer. Your symptoms may be caused by a number of common conditions.

### How is it decided if you need tests?

To help the specialist understand the cause of your symptoms, you may need tests before your appointment. The hospital will advise you what tests should be carried out and will make arrangements for you.

It may only be during your appointment that the specialist decides you should have tests and these will be arranged subsequently.

If your appointment is at the hospital, any tests may be arranged while you are there.

### What can you expect from a fast track referral?

The hospital will telephone you to arrange an appointment with a specialist. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this call may not be within two days as would normally be expected.

Please remember to accept a telephone call from an unknown number and make sure your GP has your correct address, email address and telephone number, including any mobile number.

If you have not been contacted by the hospital within **one week** of your referral, please telephone the hospital you have been referred to.

Hospital	
Telephone no	

### What can you expect from a telephone appointment?

You will be given a date and time when the specialist will telephone you.

Remember, this is a formal appointment and you will have an allocated amount of time so make sure you are available to talk to the specialist.

### What you can expect from an online appointment?

If you have not had an online appointment before, you will find guidance and information on your hospital website. Look for [Attend Anywhere](#) or [Video Consultations](#) or [Clinics](#) on the website home page.

You will have been given a date and time. On the day of the appointment you will need to go online to the hospital website or enter a link you have been sent in your appointment confirmation.

Make sure you allow enough time to prepare where you want to sit, whether you want to use a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone and that it's all working properly.

**Attend Anywhere** will guide you through different checks to make sure you will have a good online connection for your appointment.

You will enter a virtual waiting room and the specialist will join you.

Remember, this is a formal appointment, you will have an allocated amount of time so make sure you are available to talk to the specialist.

### What if you have an appointment at the hospital and you become unwell?

If you develop any symptoms of COVID-19, including a fever or new persistent cough, or loss of/changes to your taste or smell before your appointment, or if you need to self-isolate because a family member is unwell, please contact the hospital, to let them know.

**Do not go to the hospital or your appointment without speaking to them first.**

Your safety and the safety of NHS staff is priority.

### What if you cancel your appointment?

Your GP believes your symptoms need to be investigated as soon as possible, so it is important you are flexible when arranging this appointment.

You should make every effort to attend the first appointment you are given.

Whether your appointment is by telephone, online or at the hospital, if you cannot make it please contact the hospital well in advance so an alternative can be arranged for you and this time slot can be given to someone else.

### What can you expect if you have to go to the hospital for your appointment?

Your appointment may be at your main hospital or at a local private hospital.

It is understandable you would be worried about going to a hospital where patients with Covid-19 are being cared for.

**Please be reassured safety is a priority for you and the staff you will come into contact with. Hospital areas are kept separate and carefully managed for your safety.**

Your GP has considered the risks to you of going to hospital compared with the risks of waiting. It is important to attend your appointment to minimise any additional risk to your health that a delay could cause.

### What if you need help to go to the hospital?

If you cannot drive or arrange your own transport, or public transport is limited, you may be able to use the patient ambulance transport service.

Please speak to the receptionist at your GP practice as soon as possible if this needs to be arranged.

### Can someone come with me?

Please check with the hospital to see if you can take someone else with you.

If you can, they will usually be expected to wait outside.

### How should you prepare for your appointment?

You may find it useful to write down in advance any questions you want to ask during your appointment and have them with you to refer to.

The specialist will give you a lot of information, have pen and paper ready to write things down. If you think you will find it difficult to take it all in, especially if it is a telephone or online appointment, get someone in your household to write things down for you.

If your appointment is at the hospital, remember you may be able to take one other person with you to help and remember to take your appointment confirmation letter with you.