Your right: urgent two-week referral

THE NHS CONSTITUTION
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Why have you been referred on the two-week GP referral pathway?

Early diagnosis of a disease may mean more effective treatment and better outcomes. For this reason, where there is a possibility that symptoms could indicate cancer, people are referred urgently to see a specialist (on what is called a 'two-week pathway'). The great majority of people referred this way do not have cancer, but it is important to see a specialist as soon as possible to confirm or exclude a cancer diagnosis.

This leaflet sets out what you can do to help ensure that you are seen quickly, and what to do if you aren't.

What does it mean to be urgently referred?

General Practitioners (GPs) diagnose and treat many illnesses. However, on occasion, they may need to arrange for you to see a hospital doctor who specialises in your particular problem. This could be for a number of reasons, such as:

- your GP feels your symptoms need further investigation
- treatment your GP has already prescribed has not been effective
- investigations your GP has already arranged have shown some unusual results.

If your symptoms could indicate cancer, then your GP will refer you on a two-week urgent referral pathway, so a specialist can see you as quickly as possible.

Your GP will either:

- send your details urgently to the appropriate department

at a local hospital, and that department will contact you with an appointment

- make an appointment for you at the local hospital.

What do you need to do?

- If the local hospital contacts you with an appointment offer, do your best to fit in with what they are offering.
- Do your best to keep your appointment.
- If you are unable to keep your appointment, please contact the relevant clinic (you should be given their number) as soon as you can to arrange another appointment.
- Ensure that your GP has your correct address and contact details – including your mobile/daytime telephone number if possible.
- If you have any concerns or questions, discuss them with your GP.

What if your appointment is more than two weeks after the referral?

To help ensure that you are seen quickly, you now have a legal right to be seen by a specialist within two weeks of being urgently referred for suspected cancer by your GP. If this is not possible, the NHS must do everything they reasonably can to offer you clinically appropriate alternatives, but you will need to ask them first.

So, if you are not offered an appointment within two weeks of the hospital receiving the referral from your GP, and you are not content to wait longer than two weeks, you should contact the hospital you have been referred to, who will assist in finding a quicker alternative appointment. The hospital will also discuss with you any new arrangements for travel and accommodation.

The clinically appropriate alternatives offered to you may include a different specialist at the same hospital or an appointment at another hospital.

It may not always be possible to give you an alternative appointment but the NHS will do its best. If you have concerns about how your original provider has handled your right to a two-week urgent referral, you can contact your local primary care trust to discuss in more detail.

If you are not offered an appointment within two weeks of the hospital receiving your referral, but your appointment is shortly afterwards, and you are content to wait until then (eg because the convenience of your local hospital is important to you), you do not need to take any action.

If your GP has referred you to a hospital and they do not contact you within a week with an appointment, then you should contact your GP for advice about how to pursue this.

More information

The NHS belongs to us all. That's why the NHS Constitution has been created

- to let you know what you can expect from the NHS, how you can support it, and what you can do to have a say in your care. To find out more about your rights in relation to the NHS or to read the NHS Constitution, visit **www.nhs.uk/nhsconstitution**, or ask your GP surgery, local PALS or hospital for details.

Patients can use the url **www.nhs.uk/findyourpct** to locate local their local

PCT PALS and patient support services to discuss their

treatment/appointment or call NHS Direct on **0845 4647**.

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