

What happens when you are referred by your GP to see a specialist?

This leaflet describes what you can expect to happen when your GP refers you to see a specialist or consultant, at a hospital or a community health centre.

Seeing your GP:



Why have I been referred?

Your GP will discuss with you and, if appropriate, your carer, about why a referral is being recommended. It is usually because your GP wants a specialist's help in deciding on the best way to treat your condition. This might involve referring you for tests or investigations that cannot be carried out in a GP surgery. Your GP will also discuss with you what choices there are for where you can be referred.

How will I hear about where and when the appointment is?

- Wallingbrook sends nearly all referrals via Devon Referral Support Services (DRSS). DRSS will send you a letter after about one week asking you to phone them and they will ask you which hospital you'd like to be seen at and what the estimated waiting times are. DRSS will explain your options with regard to locations so you can choose the appointment that is most suitable for you. If you've not received a letter from DRSS within 10 days of your referral please phone Wallingbrook on 01769 580295 and we can provide you with your unique booking reference and password, in order for you to contact DRSS to arrange your appointment.
- Referrals which cannot be sent via Devon Referral Support Services are sent directly to the hospital. The hospital will contact you to arrange your appointment by phone or letter.
- On some occasions, usually with urgent referrals, Wallingbrook may be able to book an appointment directly with your chosen hospital. Wallingbrook will give you a reference number and a password in case you need to change or cancel your appointment online or by phone.
- You may also receive a confirmation letter from the hospital confirming your appointment.

Seeing the specialist:



What happens if I need a test or procedure?

Normally, if the specialist thinks you need any test, investigation or surgical procedure, the specialist is responsible for:

- arranging the test, investigation or procedure, explaining how and when you will receive a date and what to do if the date is not suitable for you; and
- giving you the results and explaining what they mean (this may be done in a separate appointment with the specialist or by letter).

What happens if I need new medicines?

The specialist might suggest prescribing new medicines for you or might want to

make changes to the medicines that you are already taking.

The specialist is responsible for:

- giving you the first prescription for any new medicine that you need to start taking straightaway; and
- giving you enough medicine to last at least the first seven days, unless you need to take the medicine for a shorter time. After this, you will need to contact your GP surgery if another prescription is required.

It is important that you understand whether you need to start any new medicines, or whether the specialist has changed the medicines you already take, so ask the specialist if you are not sure. In some cases, your GP will not be able to prescribe certain medicines and you will need to continue to receive these from the hospital. You will be told about this at your appointment.



What if I need a Fit Note (previously known as Sick Note)?

If you need to be certified as unfit for work following treatment by a specialist:

- The specialist should issue you with a Fit Note.
- The Fit Note should cover the period they expect you to be unfit to work, or until your next contact with the specialist.

You should not need to see your GP to get a Fit Note following hospital treatment, unless your inability to work is unexpectedly prolonged.

What if I need a follow up appointment?

The specialist will discuss with you whether you should attend hospital for ongoing follow-up care or whether you should be discharged back to your GP. If the specialist

thinks you do need to be seen again, the hospital will give you another appointment or tell you when to expect this. If you do not hear anything, please contact the specialist's office, rather than your GP surgery.

What do I do if I have any questions relating to my hospital care?

- If you have any specific questions related to your hospital care, your specialist will be able to help you with this, so it is important that you make sure you know how you can contact your specialist's office. You can contact the specialist's office by telephoning the main hospital switchboard and asking for the specialist secretary who will be able to liaise with the specialist and answer your queries.
- If you have any general questions related to your health, your GP surgery will be able to help you.

When seeing a specialist: your checklist



- If I need to start taking a new medicine straightaway, has the hospital provided me with a supply to last at least seven days (or less, if I need to take the medicine for a shorter period)?
- Do I understand what the medication is for, how to take it and any side effects?
- If appropriate, has a Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) been supplied?
- Do I have the contact details for the specialist's office if I have a question?
- If I need a Fit Note, has the hospital provided me with one, and does it cover the length of time the specialist expects me to be off work?

- Do I need a hospital follow up appointment and if so, do I know how this is organised?
- If appropriate, do I have the names and contact details of organisations who can give me more information or support if I need it?



If you are unsure about any of the questions in the checklist, please make sure you discuss them with a member of staff before you leave hospital.

Useful telephone numbers:

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| • Devon Referral Support Services (DRSS): | 01626 883888 |
| • North Devon District Hospital: | 01271 322577 |
| • Patient Advice & Liaison Service North Devon District Hospital: | 01271 314090 |
| • Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital: | 01392 411611 |
| • Patient Advice & Liaison Service Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital: | 01392 402093 |

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