

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 is arranged for within two weeks. The hospital contacts the patient by telephone to schedule the appointment or any tests that need to be done.

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

They are concerned your symptoms could suggest cancer, but this does not mean that you have cancer. More than 90% of people referred in this way will not be diagnosed with cancer.

What can I expect from a fast-track referral?

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 numbers.

Your GP has referred you to **ONE** of the hospitals in the list below. If you have not been contacted by the hospital within one week of your referral, please telephone the hospital you have been referred to. If you do not know which hospital you have been referred to call your nearest hospital or your GP practice.

- Dorset County Hospital - 01305 254109
- University Hospitals Dorset:
 - Poole Hospital - 0300 019 2823 (hold for main outpatients)
 - Royal Bournemouth Hospital – 0300 019 4741
- Salisbury District Hospital – 01722 336262
- Yeovil District Hospital – 01935 475122

What will happen during my 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 request an appointment or ask you to attend the hospital for a test.

If an appointment with a specialist is arranged, it may 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.

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 hospital

How is it decided if I need tests?

To help understand the cause of your symptoms, you may need tests before your appointment. The specialist team 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. If your appointment is at the hospital, any tests may be arranged while you are there or for a later date.

What if I am due an appointment at the hospital and I 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, please contact the hospital, to let them know.

If you are unwell, do not go to the hospital or your appointment without speaking to the hospital first.

What can I expect from a telephone appointment?

You will be given a date and time when the specialist will telephone you. Please ensure you are available at this time and be aware that you may need to accept a call from a withheld number.

What can I expect from an online appointment?

You can search for information on Attend Anywhere or Video Consultations or Clinics on your hospital website for information on online appointments.

You will have been given a date and time; please ensure you are available. At the time of your appointment, you will need to go online to the hospital website or enter a link you have been sent in your appointment confirmation.

Try to 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.

For help to prepare for an online appointment, please call Dorset Digital champions on 01305 221048.

What if I cancel my appointment?

Your GP believes your symptoms need to be investigated as soon as possible, so it is important that you 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 if I 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.

How should I prepare for my 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 try and explain things as clearly as possible, but it may be helpful to have a pen and paper ready to write things down. If your appointment is at the hospital, you may be able to take one other person with you for support.

What happens next?

In most cases, even if your specialist is suspicious of cancer, they may not be able to give a clear diagnosis without further tests.

If you are diagnosed with cancer a separate appointment will normally be made to explain the next steps and answer any initial questions you may have. You will also be given contact details of a specialist nurse who will be able to help you through the next stages of your treatment.

If you aren't diagnosed with cancer, it's still important that you tell your GP if you notice any new or unusual health changes or if your symptoms don't get better.

Your health and wellbeing

A health scare may make you think about improving your general health, for example by keeping a healthy weight, moving more, reducing alcohol, or stopping smoking. These steps can help reduce your risk of developing cancer in future.

Find out more at:

www.cancermatterswessex.nhs.uk

www.livewelldorset.co.uk