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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Hywel Dda
University Health Board

Patient Leaflet

Referral to Treatment Times

What is meant by a referral?

Your GP, Dentist, Ophthalmologist or other primary care staff will refer you to a hospital for specialist treatment. We encourage you to discuss the reasons for your referral and your potential treatment options and expectations.

What happens to your referral?

The hospital will notify you and your GP practice that your referral has been accepted and will provide you with the approximate waiting time for your appointment. You will receive an acknowledgement letter which will outline the next step in the process. In due course you will receive another letter, inviting you to book an outpatient appointment.

What is my role in the referral process?

You will need to ensure that your contact and personal details are up to date. Your details will be held securely in line with the General Data Protection Regulation.

What is the role of the hospital in managing my referral?

The hospital will offer you an appointment within the clinical timelines requested by the specialist consultant and within the national waiting times. Every effort will be made to make your appointment at your nearest hospital (depending on the speciality and the waiting time). As a Health Board we also aim you wait the shortest time possible which could result in an appointment at another hospital.

You will be offered an appointment that is the best fit for your requirements. At the time of the offer, you will have the opportunity to change the appointment if it is not suitable.

What is meant by waiting times?

We aim that you wait the shortest time possible for your treatment. The main waiting time targets set by NHS Wales are:

- 95% of people start treatment within 26 weeks of their referral being received
- 100% of people start treatment within 36 weeks of their referral being received

How is the waiting time calculated?

The waiting time starts from when the hospital receives your referral and usually ends at the start of any required treatment.

The waiting time can be stopped for various reasons. The waiting time can be adjusted if you become ill with another condition which affects your fitness for treatment. If you are unfit for more than three weeks you will be taken off the waiting list. You will be informed by letter of the reasons and receive guidelines outlining how you can return to the waiting list at a later date.

What is my role in booking a hospital appointment?

Due to the demand for appointments across various specialities, the choice of dates and times for certain specialities may be limited. Although every effort will be made to agree a suitable date, you will be required to be flexible in your approach to agreeing to an appointment as some clinics are only held on particular days.

Once you have agreed your appointment, it is important that you keep to your agreed dates. Any subsequent changes made by yourself could result in a longer wait and, if you make more than two changes, you could go back to the care of your GP / Dentist / Ophthalmologist and your waiting time will be stopped.

What happens if I can't attend my appointment?

There will be times when it may not be possible for you to attend the agreed date or time. If this is the case, you will need to inform the hospital as soon as you know and arrange a new date. You will remain on the waiting list, but your waiting time will be reset to reflect the time lost. This adjustment will be explained to you when you re-book.

If you don't attend your appointment and have not informed the hospital in advance you will be identified as Did Not Attend (DNA). This will result in you being referred back to your GP / Dentist / Ophthalmologist / other primary care staff member and you will be removed from the waiting list. Any decision made will be documented and shared with you and your GP.

What happens if the hospital cancels my appointment?

If the hospital has to cancel your appointment, they will contact you to make another appointment as soon as possible.

What is my role while waiting for my appointment?

We encourage you to follow the advice of your GP at all times. You should try to keep yourself well and comply with any medication prescribed.

If you feel that you no longer want an appointment, you must let your GP and hospital know as soon as possible. This will allow valuable NHS resources to be utilised for other people who need an appointment.