

Your Fast Track Appointment - what you need to know

Your GP feels that the symptoms you are experiencing should be investigated by a hospital specialist as quickly as possible and has referred you using the urgent two-week referral process. This process enables you to have your symptoms thoroughly checked-out by a specialist within two weeks of the referral.

We understand that receiving an urgent referral of this nature may cause you some concern or worry but please be assured that the urgent referral system exists so that you can be provided with the highest standards of care.

Does this mean I have cancer?

This is a common question for people who are referred urgently and the answer is no, not necessarily. In fact, while cancer is a possibility, 9 out of 10 people referred in this way **do not** have cancer.

Your symptoms may be caused by a number of common conditions but it is very important for you to be seen quickly, so that we can address any concerns that you have and your condition can be investigated and diagnosed as quickly as possible.

Why is it important for me to be seen by a specialist within 2 weeks?

In the event that cancer or another serious condition is diagnosed, ensuring that the diagnosis is made as early as possible gives you the best chance of subsequent treatment being more successful.

Do I need to make the appointment?

No. Your GP will forward your referral to the North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust (NCUH) who will contact you within three working days of the referral. It is important to make sure your GP has your correct daytime contact number as the hospital will not be able to give appointment details to friends or family. If you are not contactable by phone, the hospital will automatically send a letter to your home address.

If you have not received details of your appointment, within three working days of seeing your GP, please contact the NCUH contact centre on 03447 760003.

What if I cannot make the appointment I am offered?

The aim is for you to be seen by a specialist as soon as possible, so it is helpful if you are as flexible as possible when arranging this appointment and make every effort to attend the first one available. If you are having difficulties getting time off work or with other commitments, please discuss these with the hospital staff or your GP at the earliest opportunity. It is very important for you to be available to attend the appointment so that there are no delays in carrying out the investigations.

Once your appointment date is confirmed, if you are unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances, please contact the hospital as soon as possible to arrange an alternative date and time within the two week period.

If you are not able to use public transport, drive or arrange transport with friends or family, please contact Patient Transport Services on 0800 0323240 where you will be asked a number of questions to find out if you are eligible for their service.

What will happen during the appointment?

You may find it useful to take some time beforehand and write down any questions that you want to ask during your appointment - the specialist team will be happy to discuss these with you. Many people also find it helpful to take a friend or relative along with them and you are very welcome to do so.

In order to help your specialist understand the cause of your symptoms you may be required to undergo some tests. Depending on the nature of your condition, you may be required to have these tests either:

- Before you see your specialist
- During your first appointment with the specialist
- Or the specialist may refer you for these tests following your first appointment

Details on what will happen at your first appointment, and any tests you might need, will usually be sent with your appointment letter. If you do not receive this information please contact your GP.

Where can I go for support?

Before your hospital appointment, please contact your GP if you have any initial questions or concerns. During and after your appointment with the hospital specialist, you will be under the care of the hospital and fully supported throughout any further investigations or treatment that might be necessary.

Although as already stated, 9 out of 10 people who are referred urgently **do not** receive a diagnosis of cancer, for those that do, there are a number of organisations standing by to provide support and information. At any time, Macmillan Cancer Support can be contacted on 0808 808 0000, they offer a fantastic support line and website <http://www.macmillan.org.uk/> for anyone affected by, or concerned about cancer. Macmillan also offer local support from the Cancer Information & Support Service located in the Main Atrium at the Cumberland Infirmary, Carlisle (CIC). Local Macmillan advisers are available from 10am – 4pm Monday, Tuesday and Friday, and 10am – 2.30pm Wednesday and Thursday, either in person at CIC or by phone on 01228 814283.

Whatever the outcome of your investigations or diagnosis, together, your GP and the hospital staff will be there to keep you fully informed and supported throughout this process.