

Hindon Surgery's Advice for patients who have been referred to hospital

Before your hospital Appointment

This leaflet is to give you more information about the referral process.

If you have been given a copy of the referral letter then please read it and contact the surgery if there are any corrections you would like to be made. In particular **please check that your personal details (name, address, post code, telephone number, date of birth) are correct.**

Your doctor or nurse will have discussed with you the reason for the referral and the best person and place for you to be seen.

New Services: You may have been referred to one of the new services in community settings. Your doctor will have advised you to use one of these because they are more convenient than the traditional hospital appointment, you will be seen sooner and the quality is as good as and often better than the hospital alternative.

Choose and Book: If you have been referred to a hospital we will offer you a choice. This new system is called 'Choose and Book' and is a Government initiative to increase patient's involvement in their care and choice of hospital.

When we make the referral we use the computer to generate a reference number (UBRN) and password and often can make the appointment as well. We give or send the sheets with this information to you. If we have been unable to book the appointment or if the one we have booked is inconvenient you can book or change your appointment once you have returned home by following the instructions on the sheets. You should deal directly with the hospital or booking office about any further queries with the appointment (e.g. if you have to cancel).

All hospitals will have websites that give you information about their services and you can find this through the NHS Choices website.

Whilst waiting for your appointment if your condition deteriorates please come back and see the doctor.

Please do not ask us to hasten your appointment if there has been no change in your condition but you don't want to wait as long. Seeing you sooner means the hospital will have to postpone someone else and they should only do this on medical grounds.

If you **cannot attend the appointment** you must let the hospital know as soon as possible. They can then offer the appointment to another patient (but this is impossible if you leave it to the same day). If you do not attend the appointment you will not be offered another one. You will get a letter saying that you will need to be referred again. This will waste your time as well as that of the hospital. You will have to see the GP again and explain why you did not attend the appointment.

At the hospital appointment

Take your copy of the referral letter (if you have one) with you to hospital together with a list of any medicines you are taking (or the medicines themselves).

It is often useful to write down everything you want to discuss at the appointment and

any changes that have happened after the referral letter was written. Check you have covered it all before you leave the room.

Make sure you understand what has been discussed and are clear about what happens next.

If the hospital doctor has suggested a special test or operation then, please ask for a full explanation. Your GP will not know the details of some of these tests and operations and may not be able to clarify your queries. Often the hospital will have useful leaflets – please ask the doctor or clinic nurse.

Ask the hospital doctor how you will be informed of the results of any tests they arrange. Please ask the doctor to copy results to the surgery. **If you haven't heard a test result, contact the hospital.**

If your medication is changed and the hospital wants this to start as soon as possible ask the doctor for a prescription to get from the hospital pharmacy. You should be given enough for the first 14 days of treatment. If you need to continue beyond 14 days or the hospital doctor wants the GP to start the new treatment, please ask the doctor to give you a written note to leave at our reception detailing the changes (and requesting a prescription).

If your hospital doctor recommends time off work they are able to issue a **fit note** for up to six weeks. Please ask for one so you don't have to waste your time seeing your GP just to get a certificate that should have been issued by the hospital doctor (or nurse). Hospitals have been able and encouraged to do this for about ten years but many staff still do not seem to know this. Please be persistent and point out that providing the certificate will take them seconds and going to your GP may involve over an hour of unnecessary journeys, telephone calls, waiting in the surgery and a ten minute consultation to go over exactly what they have just covered.

Ask the doctor if you need to be seen by your GP for follow up and if so, when.

Taking someone with you can be a good idea. An extra pair of ears can be useful to help you remember everything that went on at the appointment

After the hospital appointment

The letter from the hospital usually takes at least two and often more weeks to come to the surgery. This may improve in 2014 if the project to provide immediate electronic letters progresses as hoped (at present it works well for pathology reports and A & E letters).

The letter will be a summary of the consultation together with a management plan for the future. It will not write down every detail of what happened.

We are happy to explain the contents of the letter but it is usually better to ask the hospital doctor face to face about anything you are unclear about.

Retirement or change of GP

At the hospital your records may record Dr Jonas (or another GP if you were previously registered at another local practice) as being your GP. It would help the surgery and the hospital if you would mention that you have a new GP. Often hospitals send letters to a previous GP and this introduces delays and can mean important information is not acted on as soon as expected. This is especially a problem in hospitals outside Wiltshire and patients referred by Dr Jan Emms (whose husband is a GP in Shaftesbury and often gets letters intended for Hindon). This is also a common problem for radiology investigations.

Transport

You are responsible for getting yourself to the hospital.

We cannot make arrangements on your behalf.

If you receive benefits you may be able to be reimbursed at the hospital on production of your benefit entitlement documents and transport cost receipts. Check first before incurring the expense.

Reception has details (and leaflets) about local public transport & community link schemes.

The surgery cannot arrange transport for review appointments, this is arranged by the hospital clinic and you should contact them directly or the transport office (01722 425152).

Patient Surveys

As part of the new GP contract you may be sent a survey by the IPSOS MORI asking about access to the surgery. It may also ask you if you can recall being offered a choice of hospitals if you had been referred in the past year. We will always offer you choice when making a hospital referral. You should answer any questions about being offered choice as 'yes' (even if you came requesting a particular hospital and did not want a choice elsewhere).

Smoking

Smoking not only causes many disease but also affects healing and complications. To give yourself the very best chance of recovery from any operation you should be a non-smoker. We will support any smokers who want to stop - just book with a GP to start the process.

18 week targets

From March 2008 hospitals have to provide the definitive treatment within 18 weeks of receiving the referral. This means that you will be seen more quickly than previously. It also means that you should only request referral when you want to have the operation or procedure within 18 weeks. There is NO NEED to request referral to get into the system.

Two Week Waits (for possible cancer)

When we suspect that your symptoms could be due to a cancer we will refer you urgently using a system called 'two week waits'. The hospital will see you within two weeks and it is **very important that you attend this appointment**. We will usually tell you that cancer is one of the possible diagnoses and that is why you are being referred to be seen quickly. For some specialities we may be able to make the hospital appointment when you are with us.

In Hindon about a 20% of the referrals we make are using this route and a quarter of these referrals were diagnosed with cancer (nationally the conversion rate is about 10%) and we have the highest incidence of cancer in Wiltshire. Fortunately the majority of these were diagnosed early and this improves the prognosis considerably.

Ready, Willing and Able

Ready - It is important that you are physically as fit as possible if the referral is for a routine surgical procedure (e.g. a joint replacement). We may well not make a referral until lifestyle issues (smoking, obesity, poor diet, excessive alcohol, insufficient exercise) have been addressed and after checking your general health (BP, blood and urine tests). If these are not

right before planned surgery the operation will be cancelled and it is better to sort these out first.

Willing – We continue to have some patients requesting a referral for an operation who then tell the specialist that they don't want what is offered. Sometimes this seems to be because of pressure from others to 'get something done'. People seem quite keen for others to have operations. We almost always only refer to a surgeon when we are requesting an operation and so if you do not want an operation it helps if you tell us and we can avoid wasting your time and scarce NHS resources.

Able - With the reduction in time to see a specialist and also to have tests done at the hospital it is especially important that you are available for the hospital appointment. When your doctor is suggesting a referral for a test or an appointment please tell them your availability. This may mean delaying the referral until you can attend. The hospital is not allowed to make appointments too far in the future, even if this suits the patient better.

If you ask us to refer you and you know you will be unavailable within 18 weeks and have to postpone the appointment all that happens is we have to go through the process again. This can take 20 to 30 minutes. GPs spend an average of 60 minutes a year per patient and it seems wrong to spend half of this time on something that can be avoided by telling us when you can attend.

YOUR COMMENTS

We welcome your comments and thank those who have made some already. Please leave a note at reception. Please include your ideas for any improvements to this service or any other service provided by the surgery.

Whether this has been your first hospital appointment or you are an experienced hospital patient we hope that you have found some useful information in this leaflet. Our aim is that you get the very best from your hospital appointment.

Telephone numbers

Salisbury District Hospital	01722 336262
Salisbury Mental Health	01722 820252
Shaftesbury:	
Westminster Memorial Hospital	01747 851535
Physiotherapy	01747 475261
Dorset County Hospital (Dorchester)	01305 251150
Bath Hospitals:	
Rheumatic Diseases	01225 465941
Royal United Hospital	01255 428331
Southampton General Hospital	02380 777222
Private Hospitals	
New Hall Hospital, Bodenham	01722 422333
The Bath Clinic	01225 835900
Chalybeate, Southampton	02380 764333
Social Services, Tisbury	01747 873200

Transport

Hindon Volunteer Cars	01747 820264
Salisbury District Hospital (Transport Office)	01722 425152
Tisbury & District Link Scheme	01747 870194

Choose & Book

Please refer to the contact telephone number given on your appointment request sheet.

Useful websites and other addresses:

www.besttreatments.co.uk

(Details about 100 common conditions and operations.)

www.patientopinion.org

(Compares hospitals based on patient opinions)

www.dh.gov.uk/selfcare

(Advice on self-care for long-term conditions)

www.nhschoices.co.uk

(Health advice and information about Hindon Surgery and all NHS organisations)