



We know that getting quick and efficient NHS treatment is really important to you and that you expect your care to be excellent.

Over the last few years we have made some real improvements in urgent care, for example reducing the time you have to wait for treatment of heart disease or cancer. Now we are focusing on providing prompt care and treatment for less urgent cases.

© Sport England



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

Until now, if you needed treatment, you may have been on one waiting list for an outpatient appointment, another waiting list for tests or scans and yet another for operations, but things are changing.

By December 2008, the longest you will wait from being referred to starting your treatment will be 18 weeks. Any appointments, tests, scans or other procedures you may need before treatment will all happen within this time limit.

This new approach will mean NHS services are more streamlined, bringing real benefits to you:

- Your diagnosis and treatment will be quicker.
- You will receive relief for symptoms, pain and discomfort earlier.
- Your end results are likely to be better due to the earlier treatment and care you receive.

BOOKING YOUR APPOINTMENT

If you are referred to see a hospital consultant or specialist you will be offered a choice of hospital or clinic and you may be referred through the Choose and Book computer system.

Choose and Book is a national computer-based referral service which gives patients a choice of place, date and time for their first outpatient appointment in a hospital or clinic.

Alternatively, your letter of referral will be sent to the hospital or clinic.

HELP US TO HELP YOU

Here are a few things that you should do to help us to treat you quickly and reduce your waiting time:

- Talk to your GP about your treatment so you know what to expect and when to expect it.
- Only book your appointment when you know you will be available (for example not immediately before a lengthy holiday); and when you feel ready and able to continue on to care.
- Keep the appointments you have been given and cancel any appointments you are not able to attend as soon as possible.

It is important that you attend all the appointments that you book. If you cancel or do not attend a hospital appointment you may have to return to your GP to be referred again.

- If the wait is shorter elsewhere be prepared to consider hospitals other than your local one.
- To make sure you are fit for treatment, think about how you might help yourself to be ready, for example by stopping smoking or losing weight.

WILL I ALWAYS RECEIVE MY TREATMENT AND CARE WITHIN 18 WEEKS?

Most patients will be treated more quickly than 18 weeks but there may be times when you do not begin treatment within that time. For example:

- If you choose a later appointment for your treatment, perhaps because of work commitments or a holiday.
- When your condition requires an extended period of testing or observation before a diagnosis can be made or the treatment can begin.
- Or when you are not fit enough to be treated or become unfit for treatment after you have been referred.

For further information on the 18 weeks promise visit www.18weeks.nhs.uk

HOW 18 WEEKS WORKS

1

Referral:

- You have an appointment with your GP, nurse or other healthcare professional who recommends a referral for tests or treatment.
- You book your first appointment through the Choose and Book system.
- Or a letter of referral is sent to the hospital or clinic.



2

Steps along the way:

- You may have tests done to diagnose your condition.
- You may start a course of medication or therapy to manage your symptoms until you start your treatment.
- You may be referred to another consultant, specialist or service.

3

Treatments:

- You may receive advice and guidance on how to handle your condition.
- You may start an agreed period of time to monitor your condition to see if you need treatment.
- You may start a course of treatment that doesn't require you to stay in hospital.
- Or you may be admitted to hospital for an operation or treatment.



Together we can call
time on hospital waiting lists



Together we can call
time on hospital waiting lists

This information can be provided in other formats or languages on request, contact the Communications Team at:

FREEPOST RRHG-CKBG-HTRJ
18weeks leaflet
NHS South East Coast, York House,
18-20 Massetts Road, Horley,
Surrey RH6 7DE
Telephone: 01293 778881
Email: info@southeastcoast.nhs.uk