

to changes in your medical condition. Sometimes extra tests are needed to fully diagnose your cancer.

### Can my waiting time be adjusted?

In certain circumstances your waiting time can be changed to take into consideration things such as:

- Patients taking time to think about their treatment options or requesting a second opinion
- Patients wanting to wait before they begin treatment because of other commitments eg. holiday or a family event
- Patient having other medical conditions that need to be addressed before further investigation or treatment.

### How the Trust manage the cancer waiting time targets?

The Trust has a patient tracking team that track suspected cancer patients through their care pathway in the Trust. They try to ensure that patients have their appointments, investigations or

treatment as required and within the cancer target time frame. Where there are delays in your waiting time, the patient tracker will let the manager of the service know to see if anything can be done to get a sooner appointment.

### Where can I get more information?

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/cancer-waiting-times>

<http://belfasttrust-cancerservices.hscni.net/>

## Cancer Waiting Times Information for Patients



This leaflet gives you information about cancer waiting times and targets that the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust tries to meet when someone has been referred with suspected or confirmed cancer.

### What is a red flag?

Red flag is the term used across the Northern Ireland Health Service to speed up appointments when there is a possibility that your symptoms could indicate cancer, or when you have received a cancer diagnosis. This ensures you will see a specialist and receive treatment as quickly as possible. These patients are covered by targets set out by the Department of Health.

### Why have I been referred as a red flag to hospital?

You've been referred as a red flag because your GP, dentist or consultant feels your symptoms need further investigation.

### How long will I wait?

The Northern Ireland Government have set waiting time targets for treating cancer patients. The current targets are:

- If your GP refers you as a red flag to a hospital for investigation because they think you may have cancer, and you are then found to have cancer, you should start treatment within 2 months (62 days) from the date of referral
- All GP referrals are checked by a consultant when the hospital receives them. If the consultant is worried about your symptoms he may choose to change your referral to a red flag so you are seen more quickly. In this case you should still start treatment within 2 months (62 days) from the date of referral
- Sometimes cancer can be found unexpectedly. You may be referred from a screening programme, get a diagnosis following attendance at the Emergency Department or when attending another department in the hospital. In this case you should

start treatment no more than 31 days after the meeting at which you and the doctor who will deliver your treatment agree your treatment plan.

### Will I always start my treatment within 31 or 62 days?

Being diagnosed with cancer can sometimes take a while. Doctors have to do various tests to check the stage of your cancer to decide on the best treatment for you. Unfortunately, you may have to wait a couple of weeks for an appointment for some of these tests. This may be because there is pressure on your hospital due to people needing particular types of scans or tests, or due to a high volume of referrals. In the UK, waiting times can vary depending on the type of cancer you have and the type of treatment you are going to have.

For some patients, starting treatment within 31 or 62 days may be inconvenient or not best for their health. You may choose to wait longer because of work or family commitments, or due