

You may be offered an outpatient clinic appointment or you may be offered a test. Some patients may be booked straight to test prior to their outpatient visit but you will see a doctor on the day of your visit.

What will happen at the hospital?

When you have your hospital appointment you will usually see a specialist who will give you some more information about what will happen next. You may also require some tests which will help both the specialist and your GP or dentist understand what is causing your symptoms. You will be told before your appointment if you need to have any tests and what you should do to prepare for them. It is important to follow these instructions, to avoid tests being delayed.

You may find it helpful to bring a friend or family member with you both as a support and to help you remember what was discussed at the appointment. You may also want

to bring a notebook to record specific information.

Any questions?

If you have any concerns or questions regarding your referral to hospital, please call the GP surgery or dentist to speak to the person who referred you.

Patient Information for Red Flag Referrals



This information leaflet explains why your GP or dentist has referred you to hospital and what it means.

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

You've been referred as a red flag because your GP or dentist feels your symptoms need further investigation as soon as possible and has referred you to a specialist. There are many common conditions that these symptoms could be linked to, including the possibility of cancer.

What is a red flag?

Red flag is the term used across the Northern Ireland Health Service to speed up appointments when your GP feels there is a possibility that your symptoms could indicate cancer. This ensures you will see a specialist as quickly as possible.

Does this mean I have cancer?

Having a red flag referral does not necessarily mean you have cancer. **94%** of people who have a red flag referral don't have cancer. However, you have been referred because you need to see a specialist or have some investigations quickly to help find out what is wrong with you so it is important you attend.

If cancer is diagnosed, then ensuring that the diagnosis is made as early as possible means treatment is likely to be more effective. This is why it is important that you are seen as soon as possible once the referral has been made.

What will happen next?

The hospital will send you an appointment either by letter within a few days or by telephone. If you have not heard anything within 2 weeks of seeing your GP or dentist please let them know, or contact the relevant appointments office in the Trust on the following numbers:

Appointment offices

Musgrave Park Hospital

028 9090 2313 or 028 9090 3813

Belfast City Hospital

028 9063 5200

Royal Victoria Hospital

028 9063 4700

Mater Infirmorum Hospital

028 9063 5777

School of Dentistry

028 9063 900

All referrals are reviewed by a specialist before an appointment is offered.

If your symptoms do not meet the regional guidelines to be seen as a red flag the specialist may change your referral to urgent or routine. They will contact your GP to let them know if this is the case.

Once you have been given your appointment it is very important that you attend. Please let the hospital know **immediately** if you are unable to keep your appointment. The hospital will then arrange another appointment with you.