

What is an urgent referral?

Your GP has arranged for you to see a hospital doctor (specialist) urgently. This is to investigate your symptoms further. You may have some tests to find out what is wrong and if it could be cancer.

How quickly will I be seen?

An urgent referral will be processed as quickly as possible and an appointment arranged for you. Some of the UK nations have targets around how quickly you'll be seen. For example, in England an urgent referral means that you should see a specialist within 2 weeks. Due to COVID-19 you may have to wait longer for your urgent referral. Your first appointment may be over the phone, a video call or at the hospital.

More than 9 out of 10 people*

referred this way are **not** diagnosed with cancer.



* This figure refers to urgent 2 week referrals in England

Ask your GP when you're likely to get an appointment.

1 Receiving an urgent referral

• Depending on where you live, you might get your appointment directly from your GP surgery, or by phone, post or email.

- **It's very important that you attend your appointment.** If you can't make it, contact the hospital as soon as you can to rearrange.
- If your symptoms get worse, tell your GP.



Handy Hints

- Check your GP has your current contact details.
- If you don't get your appointment details within a week, contact your GP surgery or the local number provided in this leaflet. Tell them it's an urgent suspected cancer referral.

2 Going to your appointment

- Your appointment letter will include: the time, where to go, who you're seeing and anything you need to do to prepare.
- You may be sent straight for tests, or you might speak to a specialist first.
- You may need to describe your symptoms again. It could help to write things down in advance.



Handy Hints

- Make sure you know where you're going.
- Think about arranging transport, time off work or childcare for the day of your appointment.
- Check if you can take a family member or friend with you for support.
- Allow extra time in case it takes longer than you expect.
- Make sure your mobile phone is charged.

3 Having tests

- The appointment letter will include details of any tests you will have and any preparations you need to make.
- You may need to have more than one test.
- Call the number on your letter if you have any questions.



Handy Hints

- Ask how you will get your results, how long it will take and make a note of this.
- The person testing you will not usually be able to tell you your results. You may have to wait to speak to your specialist.

You can find information about different types of tests at: www.cruk.org/urgentreferrals

4 Getting results

- Your specialist, or sometimes your GP, will explain your results.
- You may need to have further tests.
- The time it takes to receive your results varies – you may have to wait several weeks.



Handy Hints

- If you have another appointment, check if you can take a family member or friend with you.
- Bring a pen and paper to make notes.
- If you have been waiting for your results for longer than expected contact your GP surgery or the local number provided on this leaflet.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.

What questions could I ask?

Sometimes it's difficult to know what to ask your specialist.

Here are a few ideas that might make it easier:

- If my symptoms get worse, who should I contact?
- Should I make any changes to the medicines I'm taking?
- What tests will I need to have?
- How long will the tests take?
- What will the tests feel like?
- Do the tests have any side effects?
- How long will it take to get my test results?
- Who will give me the test results?
- If I have questions after the appointment, who should I ask?

What happens next?

If you are diagnosed with cancer you will be given lots of information by the hospital. You can also call a Cancer Research UK nurse for information and support on freephone **0808 800 4040**.

If you aren't diagnosed with cancer, it's still important that you pay attention to your body. Tell your GP if you notice any new and unusual changes or if your symptoms don't get better.

A health scare makes some people think about improving their general health, for example by keeping a healthy weight or stopping smoking. These things reduce the risk of cancer. You can also consider screening when you are invited. If you'd like to know more go to www.cruk.org/health.

Local contact details

Your GP might provide a local number (below). You can use this if you have any questions about your appointment or results.

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Notes

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Let us help you find the answers

Find information about urgent referrals cruk.org/urgentreferrals
Ask our specialist nurses **0808 800 4040***
Share your experiences cancerchat.org.uk

*Phone lines open 9am-5pm Monday-Friday

About Cancer Research UK

Cancer Research UK pioneers life-saving research to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured. From our volunteers and supporters to our scientists, doctors and nurses, we're all here to save more lives and prevent, control and cure all cancers. If you would like to support our work, please call **0300 123 1022** or visit our website www.cruk.org **Together we will beat cancer**

