

Your referral to a specialist: what you can expect

Your GP or another qualified healthcare professional has referred you to a specialist because they believe you need further assessment or treatment. Your referral:

- Has been prepared by an appropriately trained healthcare professional.
- Includes the clinical information the hospital needs to assess you safely.
- Has been made in line with NHS referral processes and your right to choose where you receive your care (*NHS Standard Contract Service Condition 6.13*).
- Is made in explicit agreement with Jess' Rule: Three Strikes and We Rethink.

Therefore, rejecting this referral would constitute a breach of both contractual obligations and nationally mandated safety guidance.

What should happen next?

The specialist service should:

- Process your referral without unnecessary delay.
- Arrange any further investigations, treatments or assessments that may be needed.

The specialist service should **not**:

- Ask the GP practice to make the referral on an alternative form or template.
- Ask the GP practice to undertake additional pre-referral investigations or treatments.

Sometimes the specialist may need extra information before your appointment. If so, they should request this through the appropriate clinical process, not by returning your referral.

Your referral is for specialist assessment. A specialist should not change your referral into an Advice and Guidance request without prior agreement from your GP practice.

If you have concerns

If you continue to have symptoms or they become worse while you are waiting:

- Contact your GP practice for advice.
- Seek urgent medical attention if your symptoms become severe or you are worried about your immediate health.

Any decision to delay, reject or convert this referral should be made by a GMC-registered doctor at the specialist service. In the absence of such identification, we will assume that the Medical Director of the specialist service is accepting responsibility for this decision.

If you believe your referral has been delayed, rejected, or handled inappropriately:

- Contact the hospital's **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** for support and advice, rather than your GP practice.
- You may also make a formal complaint through the NHS complaints process if your concerns are not resolved:

<https://www.cheshireandmerseyside.nhs.uk/contact/complaints/complaint-form-patient/>

Before leaving your specialist appointment

- If you need to start a new treatment, ask the specialist to prescribe it.
- If you need a fitness to work note, ask the specialist to issue it.
- If you need a follow up appointment or an investigation, ask the specialist how and when it will be organised, and ensure you have their contact details for any questions.