



South Gloucestershire
Clinical Commissioning Group



North Bristol
NHS Trust

Why have I been referred urgently to the hospital?

(The urgent 2 week wait referral system for suspected bowel cancer)

Exceptional healthcare, personally delivered

Why have I been referred to hospital?

Your General Practitioner (GP) has asked for you to have an urgent hospital appointment within two weeks. The “two week” appointment system was introduced so that a specialist would see any patient with symptoms that might indicate colorectal cancer (bowel cancer) as quickly as possible. At North Bristol NHS Trust we have introduced a new system where your GP can book the most appropriate test directly rather than refer you to hospital to be seen by a hospital doctor first. This has dramatically reduced the time to diagnosis compared to our previous system. For some patients, a clinic appointment is still the best initial assessment but most patients will be referred for a test. If you would prefer not to go straight to test but would prefer to be seen in clinic, this can be arranged if you inform your GP.

It is very important that you attend your appointment. If you are not available for this important test at any time in the next 2 weeks, please inform your GP as soon as possible.

Does this mean I have cancer?

No you may not have cancer. Most patients referred under the “two week” appointment system do not have cancer, but a simple or benign condition. GPs are keen to catch patients early with cancer diagnosis as this increases the prospect of a cure or enhances your health status.

So why has my GP referred me?

GPs diagnose and treat many illnesses themselves. However, on occasion they need to arrange for you to see a specialist at the hospital or arrange a test that can only take place in the hospital.

What do I need to do now?

- Make sure that your GP has your correct address and telephone number, including mobile number if possible.
- The hospital will contact you by telephone to confirm your appointment so the correct contact telephone number is very important.
- Contact the NBT cancer office on 0117 4140538 if you have not been called by the hospital within one week of the appointment with your GP.
- Once you have agreed an appointment, ensure that you follow instructions and attend on the date agreed.
- If your first appointment is in clinic, the doctor you see will give you more information about what will happen next.
- You can bring someone with you to this appointment as you may find this helpful.
- You might want to write down some questions to ask at the appointment and also write down the answers you are given.
- If you are coming for a colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy in the endoscopy department, you will be given some results on the same day.
- If you are coming for an X-Ray you will either be contacted by the hospital or your GP as soon as the scan has been reported, normally within 14 days of the appointment taking place.

If you require any further tests following on from your first investigation, this will be arranged for you by the hospital and we will keep you fully informed.

Types of investigation

There are different tests that may be used to investigate your symptoms, and depending on your individual symptoms and other medical factors the most appropriate test for you will be selected. They are all carried out as outpatients at either the radiology or endoscopy departments of the hospital.

Colonoscopy: This test allows for a visual examination of the lining of the whole of the large bowel. A small camera is passed through the back passage. This type of examination allows for diagnosis and biopsy or removal of small polyps. The clinician performing the test will be able to give you some results on the day of your test.

This test requires you to have strong bowel cleansing medication which will give you diarrhoea beforehand. You are also required to adhere to a special diet for a few days before the test. You need to be mobile and able to lie on your left side. Pain killers and sedation are given during the procedure. There are some risks associated with this test which are very rare (approximately 1 in 1000) but it is possible to make a hole on your bowel (perforation) or cause bleeding. If this happens, an operation is sometimes required.

If you have any concerns about whether you are fit for this test please discuss this with your GP or contact the endoscopy department on 0117 414 1264.

Flexible Sigmoidoscopy: This test is also used to inspect the lining of the bowel through a camera inserted into your back passage, but this test is used to look in particular at the lower part of the bowel. Strong bowel cleansing medication is not required but you will have an enema before the test to clean the lower bowel. You will be required to lie on your left hand side and be mobile enough to change position if needed. Usually this test is performed without the need for pain killers or sedation but gas and air (an inhaled pain killer known as Entonox) is available if you need it. The clinician performing the

test will be able to give you some results on the day of your test.

CT Colonoscopy (virtual colonoscopy): This is a scan which is used to visualise the large bowel. It is carried out as a day case in the radiology department, usually at Cossham Hospital. This test requires you to take some medication called gastrograffin before the test. This is likely to cause some diarrhoea but this should not be severe. You will be given detailed instructions for the preparation by the radiology department. You might be required to lie on your front or side during the test and air will be put into your bowel via the back passage (rectum) using a small tube.

If you have any concerns about whether you are fit for this test please discuss this with your GP or contact the radiology department on 03005550103.

If you are not fit enough for this test a plain CT can be arranged. This is a scan which only requires you to lie on your back. For examinations of the colon you will still need to drink gastrograffin but you won't have air put in the back passage.

If any of your regular tablets need to be stopped for any of these tests, you will be told which ones and when to stop them.

More information is available at

www.nbt.nhs.uk/colorectal

You can download patient information leaflets for all these tests and you will be sent information when an appointment is sent to you.

If you find you are on holiday or unable to attend your appointment for other reasons please telephone either North Bristol NHS Trust on 01174145054 as soon as possible to cancel and arrange a new date and time.

Please make every effort to keep your appointment, this ensures that the wait for patients is kept to an absolute minimum.

Language interpreting and services for the deaf

Interpreting services are available for a wide range of languages and British Sign Language. For more information about interpreting, please speak to a member of staff.

It is important to remember that an urgent 2 week wait referral does not necessarily mean that you have cancer.

**PATIENT
APPROVED** 

How to contact us:



Endoscopy department
0117 414 1264

Radiology department
0300 555 0103



NBT cancer office
0117 414 0538



www.nbt.nhs.uk/colorectal



If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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