

Rapid Access Gynaecology Clinic

This booklet offers further information about the Rapid Access Gynaecology Clinic. It gives details of the services the clinic provides and what to expect when you attend. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please ask a nurse or doctor caring for you.

Why have I been referred to hospital?

Your GP has requested an appointment for you at our gynaecology rapid access clinic. This is because they have concerns about your symptoms, and/or an unusual finding on your ultrasound scan, and would like you to have further tests.

Gynaecology is the branch of medicine relating to the female reproductive system.

You have been referred through the 'two week wait' appointments system. This NHS system is designed to make sure that patients with symptoms that may be caused by a cancer are seen quickly by a specialist team.

Does this mean I have cancer?

No, more than 9 out of 10 (90%) of gynaecological patients referred through the 'two week wait' system do not have cancer. Most patients will have non-cancerous (benign) conditions.

However, we want to find out what is causing your symptoms as quickly as possible and to try to resolve them for you.

Who will I see in the clinic?

Several doctors and nurses who are experienced in gynaecology work in this clinic. These will be men and women. These doctors work with, and are supervised by, a specialist consultant in gynaecological cancer.

A clinical nurse specialist also attends the clinic to provide support and information to those who need it. There is also an ultra-sonographer, who carries out ultrasound scans. Clinic nurses will coordinate the clinic, helping to make sure that you receive a high standard of care and support.

Guy's and St Thomas' is a teaching hospital where medical and nursing students come to learn. The doctor will ask you if students can be present during your appointment. If you do not want students there, please let us know. Your wishes will always be respected.

Where is the clinic held?

The clinic takes place in the McNair Women's Centre, Ground floor, Southwark wing, Guy's Hospital, St Thomas' Street, London SE1 9RT

What sort of tests or investigations might I have in this clinic?

If you do need a test or investigation, it will be done during your clinic visit or at another appointment. If you need another appointment, the receptionist may be able to arrange this for you or you may have to wait to receive a letter.

We try to make this a one stop clinic, so you may have several investigations during the one appointment. This can mean that you are in the clinic for up to three hours.

Which tests you need will depend on your symptoms. We have listed the investigations/tests performed in this clinic on the following pages. You may need more than one test or investigation, but it is unlikely that you will need all of them.

Pelvic examination

This is an examination of your abdomen and pelvis. A doctor will use their hands to feel your abdomen, to check that there is nothing unusual. Your GP may have done a similar examination already. The doctor may also need to place their fingers inside your vagina or back passage whilst carrying out this examination. A female member of staff will accompany a male doctor during this examination.

Speculum examination

This is an examination to look inside your vagina. An instrument called a speculum is used to open the vagina – this is the same instrument that is used when you have a smear test. This may be an uncomfortable feeling for some women, but it is not usually painful. A female member of staff will accompany a male doctor during this examination.

Ultrasound scan

This is a painless test, which uses sound waves to show a picture of the organs inside your body. There are two types of scan and you may have both tests. For an abdominal ultrasound a probe is put on your tummy and for a transvaginal ultrasound a probe is placed inside your vagina.

Colposcopy

This test is similar to a smear test and is usually painless. A large magnifying glass is used to look at the surface of your cervix (entrance to your womb). If there are any abnormal areas the doctor will take a sample (a biopsy) and check the cells under a microscope.

Vulvoscopy

This is a procedure which allows the doctor to carefully examine the skin on your vulva (the folds of skin around the entrance to your vagina). This procedure will only be carried out if you have been having problems in this area. A large magnifying glass is used to look at the surface of your vulva. If there are any abnormal areas the doctor will take a sample (a biopsy) and check the cells under a microscope.

Hysteroscopy

A very small telescope is used to look inside your womb (uterus). A sample of cells may be taken from the lining of the womb (a biopsy) and checked under a microscope. The procedure may feel uncomfortable for a very short time.

Biopsy

If you have an area of itchy or sore skin, or a lump that does not go away, the doctors may wish to take a biopsy. You will be given a local anaesthetic for this procedure. A local anaesthetic

uses an injection to numb a part of your body. You will be awake but you won't feel pain. During the procedure, a small piece of skin is removed and sent to be checked under a microscope.

Blood tests

You may need a blood test. This is normally done in the same clinic, after you have seen the doctor.

These tests will be explained to you in more detail at the clinic by your doctor and nurse.

What if I need tests that cannot be done during the clinic?

Some patients will need further tests or investigations that are not listed here. These will be arranged for another time. Your doctor or nurse will explain the tests to you.

When will I find out the results of my tests?

This will depend on the investigation(s) you have. Sometimes we are able to give you your results on the same day.

If a biopsy is taken, it can take a few weeks before you receive the results. You will either be sent a letter, asking you to return to clinic for these results, or you will be given a telephone number to call for the results.

Should I bring anything or anyone with me?

Please bring along a list of any tablets or medications that you take.

You may want to have another person with you. This can be a partner, a relative or a friend who can help you to remember the information given to you by the doctor or nurse.

How long will I be in clinic for?

We will try not to keep you waiting on the day of your appointment, but delays can sometimes happen. You may like to bring something with you to read, to help pass the time.

The length of your appointment will depend on your symptoms and whether we need to carry out tests in the clinic or not. It is best to allow yourself the whole morning, so that you are not worrying about being delayed.

Should I still come to the clinic if I have my period?

Yes, please do attend so that we can do an initial assessment of your symptoms. You may need to come back for some tests, but this will be explained to you.

What if I cannot attend?

Please let us know as soon as possible if you cannot attend the appointment you have been given. If you still wish to be seen by us, we will organise another appointment for you.

Please call **020 7188 3584** or **020 7188 3585** if you need to cancel or re-schedule an appointment.

Where can I get more information or support?

During your appointment, we will give you time to ask us any questions about what is happening to you. We will also provide you with any relevant printed information.

If you want to discuss your concerns further or if you would like more information or support, please contact us using the details listed below. If at any time you feel you have not had enough information, or that we are not meeting your needs, please let us know.

We look forward to meeting you at your appointment.

Contact us

Two week wait office (appointment enquiries) t: 0207 188 0902

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Information and support organisations

British Association for Sexual & Relationship Therapy
t: 020 8543 2707 w: www.basrt.org.uk

Dipex (Database of Individual Patient Experiences)
w: www.dipex.org

NHS Direct (for information about the 'two week wait' appointment system)
t: 0845 4647 w: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Vulval Pain Society
w: www.vulvalpainsociety.org

Women's Health Concern
t: 0845 123 2319 w: www.womens-health-concern.org

Further information

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk