

# Elective Care Access

This leaflet will help you understand how long you should wait to be seen for Outpatient and Inpatient Care (non-emergency care) and answer any of your questions about waiting times.

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## Summary

Guy's & St. Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust is committed to providing timely access to services and treatment for all patients that are referred to the hospital. The NHS Constitution gives patients the right to access services within maximum waiting times, and for the NHS to take all reasonable steps to offer you a range of suitable alternative providers if this is not possible. Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust has devised an Elective Care Access Policy to ensure patients are aware of their rights and responsibilities when they are referred into the hospital.

## Waiting time starts

The maximum waiting time for non-urgent consultant-led treatments is 18 weeks from the date the hospital receives your referral letter, to the date you receive treatment for the condition for which you have been referred. The hospital uses a 'clock' to monitor your waiting time from referral to treatment.

Your GP should have explained that you need to be ready and available to attend appointments within 18 weeks for a routine appointment. If you have other commitments preventing you from attending, please discuss this with your GP who may decide to delay your referral.

1. Your maximum 18-week waiting time may be affected if:

- you choose to delay treatment
- delaying the start of treatment is in your best clinical interests – for example, where stopping smoking or losing weight is likely to improve the outcome of the treatment
- it is clinically appropriate for your condition to be actively monitored in secondary care without clinical intervention or diagnostic procedures at that stage
- you fail to attend appointments that you had chosen from a set of reasonable options
- the treatment is no longer necessary.

2. During your 18-week waiting time you may be required to:

- attend outpatient appointments
- undergo tests, scans or other procedures to help ensure that your treatment is tailored appropriately to your condition
- have medication or therapy to manage your symptoms until you start treatment
- be referred to another consultant or department
- be added to the waiting list for surgery.

## **Agreeing a date for your first appointment**

The Trust will aim to offer you a choice of dates for your appointment. Your GP may book your appointment through the E-referral service. This service offers direct access to hospital appointments. Alternatively the hospital will contact you to agree an appointment date. If you are unable to agree an appointment within 18 weeks you may be discharged back to the care of your GP.

## **Agreeing a date for a follow-up appointment, diagnostic test or admission**

If you require a follow-up appointment, diagnostic test or a date of admission, the hospital will contact you to agree a date. If you are unable to agree a date within 18 weeks you may be discharged back to the care of your GP.

## **Rearranging your appointment or admission**

Patients can request to reschedule an agreed appointment or admission once and this will have no impact on the waiting time. However, further requests to reschedule an appointment may be declined and following clinical review of your case you may be referred back to the care of your GP.

## **Appointment or admission dates changed by the hospital**

Guy's & St. Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust is committed to reducing hospital cancellation/rescheduling and will take all reasonable steps to avoid changing your appointment or admission date. If the Trust does change the date of your appointment or admission we will ensure this is rebooked for you as soon as possible.

## **Failing to attend your appointment or admission date**

If you fail to attend an appointment or admission without informing the hospital, the clinician will review your case and decide whether it is appropriate for you to be discharged back to the care of your GP.

The hospital will never routinely discharge children, vulnerable adults or cancer patients for failing to attend an appointment.

## Waiting time ends

Your waiting time will end for one of the following three reasons:

- When you start receiving treatment for the condition for which you were referred, this may include:
  - being admitted to hospital for an operation or treatment
  - medication provided to treat your condition as part of your outpatient appointment
  - having a treatment procedure performed as part of your outpatient appointment.
- A clinical decision is made that treatment is not required at this stage. Your condition may be monitored for a period of time by a clinician and/or you may receive advice and guidance from a clinician on how to manage your condition. You may be discharged back to your GP.
- You decide that you no longer require treatment for the condition for which you have been referred. You will then be discharged back to your GP.

## What can you do if you feel you have waited too long?

If you feel your treatment has not started within 18 weeks or you have concerns that you will not be treated within this time frame, please contact our PALS team. The PALS team will pass your concerns onto the relevant manager for investigation.

## Useful contacts

### 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

### Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

**t:** 020 7188 8815      **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

**NHS Choices** – Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

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