

What happens when you are referred by your GP to see a consultant privately or you see a private specialist?

This leaflet describes what you can expect to happen if you ask your GP to refer you to see a specialist doctor privately or if you see a specialist privately outside of the NHS.

What happens next?

Your GP will write a referral letter if they think it is appropriate and send it to the consultant that you have both agreed to, this will include any relevant medical details about you. Some additional work may incur charges you will be informed of this prior before the work is undertaken.

You should contact the consultant's team directly to organise an appointment. Should there be any appointment issues in the future, you should contact them directly.

Seeing the Consultant:

What happens if I need a test or procedure?

If the consultant/specialist thinks that you need any tests (including blood tests), or a surgical procedure, they are responsible for:

- arranging the test and any medications that might be needed for this as well as explaining how and when you will receive a date and what to do if the date is not suitable for you;
- giving you the results and explaining what they mean (this may be done in a separate appointment with the Consultant/specialist or by letter).

You should not visit your GP surgery to discuss the results of tests organised by others, it is the consultant/specialist responsibility to discuss this with you.

What happens if I need new Medicines?

See Below for more information.

What happens if I need to transfer my care back to the NHS?

If after seeing the consultant/specialist privately you want to be back under NHS care, regulations allow for you to transfer back. This transfer needs to be done by the private Consultant/specialist who is overseeing your care and you should not be passed back to the GP for this to be done. There are a few reasons why;

- it delays your care
- your consultant/specialist knows the full details of your condition and where best to refer you to
- it wastes precious NHS appointments with your GP

What if I need a Fit note (previously known as a sick note)?

If you need to be certified as unfit for work following treatment by a consultant/specialist:

- the Consultant/specialist is responsible for issuing you with a Fit Note, this includes after operations.
- the Fit Note should cover the period they expect you to be unfit to work, or until your next contact with the consultant/specialist. You should not need to see your GP to get a Fit Note following hospital treatment unless your inability to work is unexpectedly prolonged.

What happens if I need a follow-up appointment?

The consultant/specialist will discuss with you whether you should attend hospital for ongoing follow-up care or whether you should be discharged back to your GP. If the Consultant/specialist thinks you do need to be seen again, the hospital will give you another appointment or tell you when to expect this. If you do not hear anything, please contact the Consultant/specialist's office, rather than your GP surgery.

What do I do if I have any questions?

If you have any specific questions related to your care, you should contact the consultant/specialist's team directly, it is important that you make sure you know how you can contact your consultant/specialist's office. Thousands of appointments are wasted with NHS GPs discussing issues that should be dealt with by Consultant/specialist's.

Medicines:

The consultant/specialist might suggest prescribing new medicines for you or might want to make changes to the medicines that you are already taking.

Can my GP take over prescribing?

If you ask your GP to take over prescribing of a medication or treatment recommended by the private consultant/specialist, they will need to be satisfied that prescribing is appropriate, responsible and what they would prescribe for other NHS patients with the same diagnosis or condition.

Under NHS GMS Regulations the patient is entitled to receive any drug which is available on the NHS, via an NHS prescription. Therefore, GPs can convert a private script to an FP10 if the patient requests this. However, the GMC states that the GP has a duty to prescribe only in the best interests of the patient and only within their level of competence which takes priority. There are a number of circumstances when GPs will decline the request or offer to prescribe an alternative medicine.

- A letter explaining the full rationale for the treatment has not been provided by the private Consultant/specialist.
- He or she feels the medicine is not clinically necessary.
- The medication is unlicensed.
- The medication is prescribed outside of its licensed indication.
- The medication is not one he or she would normally prescribe.
- The medication needs special monitoring or shared care and he or she feels they do not have the expertise to do this.
- The use of the medication conflicts with NICE guidance or locally agreed protocols.
- An equivalent but equally effective medicine is prescribed locally under prescribing advice from the CCG. In this situation you will be offered the equivalent medicine.

In any of these circumstances the patient will retain the option of purchasing the recommended medicine via a prescription from their consultant in the private sector. There is also no provision for refunding any money already spent on private treatment, including medicines.

Requests to continue prescribing may take up to 2 weeks to be processed and sometimes longer if we need to query the suggested treatment/medication. We suggest your private consultant/specialist gives you one month's supply of medication whilst we consider the above, they are responsible for giving you at least the first prescription of any new medication that they recommend.