IF YOUR GP REFERS YOU...

YOU CAN CHOOSE



Choosing your hospital or service

What can I choose?

If your GP needs to refer you for a physical or mental health condition, in most cases you have a legal right to choose which hospital or service you go to, which includes many private and NHS hospitals that provide services to the NHS. You may also choose your clinical team led by a consultant or named healthcare professional.

GP surgeries tend to refer to local hospitals and services however if you want to be referred somewhere else in the country or if you want your doctor to see if there is another hospital that can see you more quickly, ask your GP. If your GP thinks there is a clinical reason why you shouldn't go somewhere else, they will tell you.

You can choose a hospital or service based on whatever matters most to you – this could include waiting times, quality of service, your previous experience, the opinions of other patients, the location or your GP's recommendation.

This leaflet talks about some of the frequently asked questions that people have about choosing where to be referred to.

If you want to find out more you can visit
www.nhs.uk/patientchoice

Why should I choose where to have my treatment?

People tell the NHS that they want to be more involved in making decisions and choosing their own healthcare.

Most people say it is helpful to be able to choose where and when they access NHS services. Even if you don't mind where you go, it is important to know that you have a choice. It may be that you want to go somewhere away from home but closer to your family.

Or perhaps you want to start your treatment as quickly as possible. It's entirely up to you to decide.

Where can I find information to help me choose?

There are a number of places where you can access information about hospitals and services:

- You can ask your GP about what might be the best choice for you, once you tell them what matters to you most.
- You can compare information about hospitals, services and consultants at **www.nhs.uk**

This website includes information about the quality of care, waiting times, parking and travel. Simply search using the '**Services Near You**' option available at the top of page. You can also search according to the operations and treatments that the hospitals or services offer.

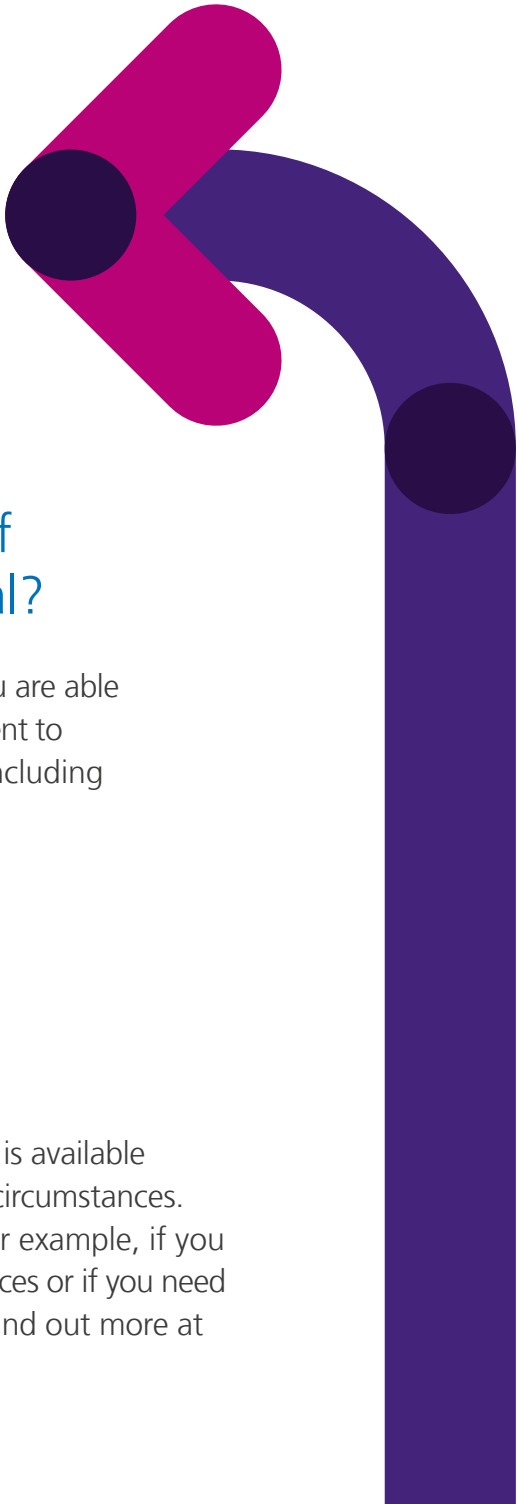
Do I have to choose straight away?

You do not need to choose straight away. You can take some time to consider the information and decide in the next few days, just tell your GP that you need more time and they will tell you what to do.



Once I have made my choice, how do I book a hospital appointment?

You can book your appointment while you are at the surgery, via the NHS e-Referral service or over the phone. Use the shortlist of hospitals or services provided in your '**Appointment Request**' letter. You'll be given a password and reference number that allows you to book your appointment online or over the phone. The shortlist is selected by your GP so ensure that you tell your GP during the appointment about your preferences.



Do I have to pay if I choose a hospital?

All the hospitals or services you are able to choose from provide treatment to NHS patients free of charge, including private hospitals.

Is choice available to everybody?

A choice of hospital or service is available to most patients and in most circumstances. There are some exceptions, for example, if you are a member of the armed forces or if you need to be seen urgently. You can find out more at **www.nhs.uk/patientchoice**

If your GP refers you... You can choose

You have a legal right to choose where you are referred to for your first outpatient appointment if:

- Your GP needs to refer you for non-emergency treatment or tests.
- You are not a member of the armed forces, a prisoner or on temporary release from prison.
- You are not detained under the Mental Health Act 1983, in a secure hospital setting or in 'other prescribed accommodation'.
- If you meet all of the above, then the steps below can help you. If not then please ask your GP what options are available to you.

In preparation for your appointment

1. You can find out about the choices available to you via **www.nhs.uk/patientchoice**
2. Think about what factors are important to you in choosing where you are referred to e.g. whether you want to be treated quickly or availability of parking.

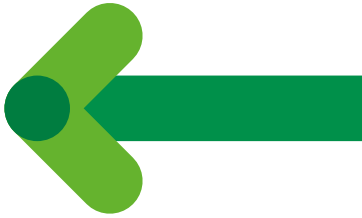
During your appointment

3. Discuss your options with your GP and decide whether or not you want to have treatment. Information about shared decision making can be found via **sdm.rightcare.nhs.uk**

4. Discuss your preferences with your GP e.g. would you like to see a particular consultant's team or would you like to have treatment later?

5. If you know where you want to go or if you need more time to consider the information, tell your GP and they will guide you through the process.

6. If using the NHS e-Referral System, your GP will create a shortlist for you to choose from.



After your appointment

7. Consider your options and discuss with friends and family, or ask for advice from your surgery.

8. Find and compare services and consultants via **www.nhs.uk/patientchoice** using the '**services near you**' tool.

9. Once you have decided, you can book your appointment while you're at your surgery, or by following the instructions on your Appointment Request letter to book online or over the phone.

What can I do if I am not offered a choice of hospital?

If you feel you are not offered choice, talk to your GP. If you have any further questions search '**The NHS Choice Framework**' at **www.gov.uk** this outlines what to do if you are not offered choice.

MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about choosing your hospital or service visit **www.nhs.uk/patientchoice** or **ask your GP**.