

What is an urgent suspicion of cancer referral?

Your GP, nurse, or dentist has arranged for you to have tests or to see a hospital doctor (specialist). This is to investigate your symptoms, find out what is wrong and if it could be cancer.

Most people will not have cancer, but if you do, early diagnosis and treatment are important.

You will get your appointment as soon as possible. But due to COVID-19 you may have to wait longer than normal. Your first appointment may be over the phone, a video call, or at the hospital. Staff at the hospital have made every effort to make sure it's a safe place to visit.

More than 9 out of 10 people

referred this way are **not** diagnosed with cancer.



Ask your GP or nurse when you're likely to get an appointment.

1 What happens now?



- You may get your appointment details by post or over the phone. If you have a phone call it could be an 0800 number (from NHS Scotland). Please do answer.
- It's very important to go to all your appointments and tests. If you can't attend contact the hospital as soon as possible to rearrange.
- If your symptoms change, get worse, or if new symptoms develop contact your GP practice.

Handy Hints

- Ask your GP or nurse which hospital you are being referred to.
- If you don't get your appointment details within the time expected phone the hospital switchboard and ask to speak to the referral service. Tell them it's an urgent suspicion of cancer referral.
- Contact the person who referred you if the hospital can't help with this.

2 Going to your appointment



- You may be sent straight for tests, or you might speak to a specialist first.
- Do not attend if you have symptoms of COVID-19, or you have recently tested positive for COVID-19 and are isolating. Ask for a new appointment.

Handy Hints

- Make sure you know where you're going.
- Check if you can take a family member or friend with you.

3 Having tests



- You should receive information about your tests and any preparations you need to make.
- You may need to have more than one test on different days.

Handy Hints

- Ask how you will get your results and how long it will take.
- The person testing you will not usually be able to tell you your results. You may have to wait to speak to your specialist.

You can find information about different types of tests at www.cruk.org/tests

4 Getting results



- The doctor who orders your test will explain your results. This is usually your specialist or someone in their team.
- You may need to have further tests.

Handy Hints

- If you've been waiting longer than expected for your results, contact your specialist's secretary.
- If you don't have contact details, ask your GP practice for advice.

Do ask any questions you may have.

Your urgent suspicion of cancer referral



What questions could I ask?

Sometimes it's difficult to know what to ask.

Here are a few ideas that might make it easier:

- If my symptoms get worse, who should I contact?
- Should I make any changes to the medicines I'm taking?
- What tests will I need to have?
- What are the benefits and risks of the tests?
- How long will the tests take?
- What will the tests feel like?
- How long will it take to get my test results?
- What happens if I don't go to any appointments or tests?
- If I have questions after the appointment, who should I ask?

What happens if I have cancer?

We know this is a difficult and worrying time. There is help and support available for you and your family. You will be given lots of information by your healthcare team. Your specialist will discuss and agree treatment options with you. Once you agree on treatment, you should ideally start this within 31 days.

For more information about cancer go to www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer

What happens if I don't have cancer?

If you are not diagnosed with cancer, it's still important that you pay attention to your body. Contact your GP practice if you notice any new or unusual changes or if your symptoms don't get better.

A health scare makes some people think about improving their general health, for example, keeping a healthy weight or stopping smoking. These things reduce the risk of cancer. You can also consider screening when you are invited.

If you'd like to know more go to www.cruk.org/health

Notes



It might help to make a note of any contact numbers, appointment times, and questions you want to ask.

Find information about urgent referrals www.cruk.org/urgentreferrals
 For health information visit www.nhsinform.scot

About Cancer Research UK

Cancer Research UK pioneers life-saving research to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured. From our volunteers and supporters to our scientists, doctors and nurses, we're all here to save more lives and prevent, control and cure all cancers. If you would like to support our work, please call **0300 123 1022** or visit our website www.cruk.org

Together we will beat cancer



Healthier Scotland
Scottish Government



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