Urgent two-week wait referral system – how it works

This leaflet explains how our two-week wait referral system works and the importance of attending your appointment.

Why have I been referred to hospital to see a gynaecologist?
Your GP has identified that you have symptoms that might indicate cancer. He or she has therefore asked for you to have an urgent hospital appointment within 2 weeks. It is extremely important that you attend this appointment for the following reasons:

- You need to have investigations as soon as possible.
- In most cases, after these investigations, the gynaecologist will be able to reassure you that cancer has not been diagnosed.
- If cancer is found, the earlier it is diagnosed and treated, the better the health outcomes are.

Does this mean I have cancer?
No, not necessarily. The majority of patients referred in this way do not have cancer, but may have another condition that needs treatment.

What symptoms need urgent referral?
- Vaginal bleeding or discharge in a woman who has been through the menopause.
- An area on your cervix (neck of the womb) that looks unusual or abnormal.
- A lump or ulcer in the vulva or vagina.
- Persistent abdominal pain, bloating, loss of appetite or unexplained weight loss, particularly if more than 12 times per month in a woman more than 50 years of age.

Your GP may have arranged a blood test or ultrasound scan before referring you to hospital.

What will happen at the clinic appointment?

If you are under the age of 50 you will ideally have used a reliable form of contraception for at least 3 weeks prior to your clinic appointment (but if not, please still attend the appointment). You will need to bring a urine sample on the day as a pregnancy test may be required prior to any procedures.

- **Symptoms** - The doctor will ask you about any symptoms you have been experiencing.
- **Health** – He or she will also ask about your general health, any medical problems you suffer from, and any previous surgery. If you take any medications please bring a list with you.
- **Examination** - The doctor will also examine you, feeling your tummy, looking for any lumps or areas that are tender to touch. He or she will also need to perform an internal examination.
The doctor will then discuss what has been found on examination, and the results of any tests that have been performed previously.

What will happen next?
In order to rule out cancer they will conduct/arrange further investigations. Depending on the symptoms, one or more of the following tests may be arranged:

- Biopsy. A small piece of tissue is taken and sent to the lab to be tested. Depending on your symptoms this may be taken from the lining of the womb (often called ‘pipelle’), cervix, vulva or vagina. This can usually be done at your first appointment.
- Further blood tests.
- Ultrasound scan.
- CT X-ray or MRI scan.
- Hysteroscopy. A small camera is passed through the neck of the womb to look inside and take a sample of the lining of the womb. This is a quick procedure performed while you are awake using local anaesthetic. (There is a separate information leaflet for this.)

Some of these examinations and biopsies may be uncomfortable. You may benefit from taking some simple analgesia such as Ibuprofen or Paracetamol which you can take just prior to your hospital appointment. If you need any further advice please speak to your local pharmacist or GP.

Please note that if you are attending the one-stop clinic for postmenopausal bleeding you may need to wait for further investigations later on the same day. It is therefore advisable to assume the appointment will take up most of your day.

Once the required investigations have been carried out the doctor will see you back in clinic to discuss the findings and make a plan with you for your ongoing care.

If you need treatment that is not urgent you will no longer be in the two-week wait system, but will be followed up appropriately with routine care.

If everything appears normal you may be reassured and discharged.

What do I need to do now?
- Please take the earliest appointment offered to you. This includes your first appointment and any further tests or investigations. This helps us to exclude or Hospital, or the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford.
- Please try not to cancel your appointment. Let the hospital know immediately if you are unable to attend your appointment, so the time can be offered to someone else. It is really important that you arrange an alternative date and time as soon as possible if you are planning to cancel.
- Please feel free to bring someone with you to this appointment. They can come in with you to see the Doctor if you wish.