

Understanding Cancer Waiting Times

Until the introduction of the NHS Cancer Plan in September 2000, about two-thirds of patients referred urgently by their family doctor were seen within two weeks and waits of several months between referral and treatment were not uncommon. Now nearly all patients referred urgently with a suspicion of cancer are seen within two weeks and then treated within 62 days.

Waiting Times Standards

2 Week Wait

Patients referred urgently by their GP (or Dentist) with suspected cancer (or with breast symptoms where cancer was not initially suspected) should be seen within 14 days.

31 Days Wait

First Treatment Standard

Patients should receive their first definitive treatment within 31 days of being diagnosed with cancer and agreeing their package of care.

Subsequent Treatment Standard

Patients should receive their second or subsequent treatment within 31 days of previous treatment where the treatment is surgery, an anti-cancer drug regimen or a course of therapy.

62 Days Wait

First Treatment Standard

Patients should receive their first definitive treatment within 62 days of their urgent GP or NHS cancer screening service referral.

(Note that for acute leukaemia, children's cancer and testicular cancer, the standard from urgent GP referral to first treatment is 31 days).

First Treatment Standard for Consultant Upgrades

Patients whose priority is upgraded by their consultant should receive their first definitive treatment within 62 days.

NHS Cancer Waiting Times

An overview of the NHS Cancer Waiting Time Standards

Screening Referral

Applies to anyone referred for further assessment by one of the national screening programmes (Breast, Bowel and Cervical).

Urgent GP Referral

Those patients who have been to their GP (or Dentist) and have been given an urgent referral to a hospital specialist as their symptoms might indicate cancer. They are also known as "2 week wait" referrals.

Other Referral

Any other type of referral eg. A non-urgent GP referral, a patient attending A&E, referrals between hospital specialists.

Further Assessment

A process of further diagnostic testing.

Initial Appointment

This maybe an outpatient appointment, a diagnostic test or a combination of the two.

Decision to Treat

The day the patient and the hospital specialist agree the treatment plan.

Consultant Upgrade

This is when a hospital specialist upgrades the patient to an urgent referral, as their symptoms might indicate cancer.

Further Information

You can also find more information on these websites -

NHS England:

www.england.nhs.uk

