

Introduction:

The Covid pandemic has meant that there are more people waiting for hospital appointments and treatment. We know that it can be very difficult for many people who are waiting. The NHS is working hard to see people as quickly as possible, but it is going to take a while before waiting times are back down to where they were before the COVID-19 pandemic began in the UK in early 2020.

Once a referral has been received:

Your referral to the hospital will be reviewed by a clinician who will look at your referral and make a decision about the appropriate clinic for you to attend. This is called triaging. Once your referral has been triaged you will be added to the Outpatient waiting list.

At triage it may be decided that further investigations or tests are needed before a decision is made about a clinic appointment. If investigations or tests are required these will be organised by the clinical team and you will be contacted by the hospital accordingly.

Arranging your appointment:

A member of the booking team will attempt to call you to arrange an appointment. This call will come through as a 0300 or an unknown number on the caller ID. If it has not been possible to speak to you then you will be sent an appointment letter which will detail the date and time of the appointment as well as details about where to go when you arrive at one of our hospitals or community venues. An appointment letter will also be sent confirming any appointment agreed over the telephone (for appointments taking place with more than 7 days' notice).

Please read the letter appointment letter you have received carefully. The appointment letter will also indicate the type of appointment being offered. You may be asked to attend the hospital for a face-to-face appointment, or you may be asked to attend a virtual clinic, either by telephone or by video technology. The appointment letter will offer instructions on how to access a virtual clinic (telephone or video) if this has been offered.

Video outpatient appointments are a secure NHS video call service for patients. We use a system called 'Attend Anywhere' which can be accessed on a PC, laptop, Mac or an iOS/Android device via Google Chrome or Apple Safari browsers. The video call is free (except your internet usage charge). Further details on video outpatient appointments can be found here: [Video outpatient appointments – East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust \(esht.nhs.uk\)](https://www.esht.nhs.uk/video-outpatient-appointments)

Clinic appointments take place across all our hospital sites (the Conquest Hospital in Hastings, Eastbourne District General Hospital, Rye, Winchelsea and District Memorial Hospital, Bexhill Hospital and Uckfield Community Hospital). Hospital appointments are booked to ensure patients are seen as quickly as possible and in the most appropriate clinic, and it may be that you are booked an appointment which is not at the hospital site nearest to where you live.

We also provide a Call/Text reminder service. You will receive a reminder 7 days prior and again 36 hours prior to your appointment.

If you require an interpreter, please contact the appointment centre who will be able to arrange this for you (0300 13 14 600).

Getting to your appointment:

If you travel by car, please note that parking space is limited, and the car parks can be full at peak times at our hospitals. Please consider your method of transport to your appointment and whether alternative options to using the car can be made. Further information on travel options can be found at: [Travelling to our hospitals – East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust \(esht.nhs.uk\)](https://www.esht.nhs.uk/travelling-to-our-hospitals)

Travel expenses – Patients who receive state benefits may be entitled to obtain reimbursement of public transport fares. You will need to produce proof of your entitlement, i.e., patient benefit book, letter, and your travel tickets. The Receptionist can advise you of the claims process when you attend clinic.

Patient transport – If you require and are eligible for patient transport, please contact the South-Central Ambulance Service on 0300 123 9841 who will assess your eligibility/arrange transport. This cannot be done any more than 14 days in advance of your appointment.

Parking – The main public car park is pay-on-exit and the rest are pay-and-display. Patients and/or visitors may be taken to or collected from the main entrance at drop off points, but cars cannot wait in these areas. Discounted and concessionary ticket information is available at the site Parking Office in the main public car park.

Patient assistance – If you are a carer/escort for a patient and you require a wheelchair please ask at the hospital Information Desk where our staff/volunteers will be able to assist you. Unfortunately, our receptionist and porters are unable to assist patients getting in or out of cars.

Preparing for your appointment:

We want to help you to be involved in your health care decisions. To do this, you may wish to write down some details of your medical history, such as dates of operations, illnesses, allergies etc.

You may have lots of questions you want to ask. It can help to write a list of questions you want to ask while you wait for your appointment. Asking questions also helps our staff understand what's important to you. Some questions you might want to ask are:

- What are my treatment options?
- What are the pros and cons of my treatment options?
- If I need more support or advice, where can I get it?

You do not have to use the three questions above; they are only a suggestion.

Attending an outpatient appointment (face-to-face, telephone or virtual):

Please read your appointment letter carefully and follow any guidance provided in this letter.

Although you have an allocated time slot for your appointment, please be aware that you may have to wait as other appointments can take longer than expected or the doctor may be called away to an emergency. Hospital staff will always try to keep you informed about any delays.

Don't forget to bring/have available for your appointment:

- Your appointment letter/card
- A record of any medicines you may be taking
- Your record book with recorded recent blood test results if you are taking anticoagulants such as Warfarin
- Any specimens as requested in your appointment letter
- Please note if you have been asked to provide a urine specimen you should collect a container from either your GP surgery or from the local pharmacist (a jam jar etc, is not acceptable)
- Any private X-rays or medical records
- Current spectacles (bifocal or reading and distance)
- Your records of blood/urine tests and insulin if you are diabetic
- A pen and paper to note down any information you may want to remember

What will happen at your appointment:

When you arrive at the hospital for your Face-to-Face appointment, please check in using the self-service kiosks located in the main reception areas, unless your letter directs you elsewhere. Please bring your appointment letter with you, as this will help our staff in directing you to the correct clinical area. If you are attending a Telephone or Virtual appointment, please follow the instructions provided in your appointment letter.

If you have any special needs which may need specific support during your visit, please advise the receptionist.

You will be under the care of the consultant named in your letter, but you may not be seen by them personally. There may also be medical students present in some clinics to observe, as this helps with their training and development. You may be asked if you are willing to be examined by a student. If you do not wish to be seen by students, you may refuse. This will not affect your treatment in any way.

As part of your consultation, it may be necessary for you to attend other departments for further investigations. Please be prepared to wait or come back as required for further appointments.

Patients are seen in order of their appointment times. We ask that patients do not arrive more than 15mins prior to your appointment time. If you arrive early, it is unlikely that you will be seen before the time given for your appointment.

You may need to undress to be examined. Please wear clothing which is comfortable and easy to remove.

If you would like another member of staff present to chaperone your physical examination, please tell the Clinic Nurse when you arrive for your appointment so that this can be arranged.

Following your appointment:

During your appointment your clinician will discuss the best course of action for you. There are several possible outcomes of this:

- You may be sent for an investigation (e.g., MRI scan)

- You may be sent for a second opinion
- You may be given a return appointment to our outpatient clinic
- You may be placed on a patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU) pathway
- You may be added to the waiting list for surgery
- You may be discharged.

If the appointment is no longer needed or needs to be rescheduled:

To make sure our patients are not waiting longer than necessary it is important that appointments are kept. If the appointment you have been offered is inconvenient or is no longer required and you wish to change or cancel it, please contact our appointment centre using the contact details below. We would appreciate it if you could give us as much notice as possible to ensure your appointment can be allocated to another patient.

Appointment Centre: 0300 1314600

www.esht.nhs.uk/outpatients/appointments/

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening such as severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains please dial 999.

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

GP surgeries are still open

If you experience an increase in pain or a deterioration of your symptoms you should contact your General Practitioner for review and advice. GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

Further guidance for patients:

It is very important that you to look after your health and wellbeing whilst you are waiting for your appointment. Advice to support patients to be as healthy as they can be found at:

[East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust – My Planned Care NHS](#)

Your personal information:

Whenever you visit our hospitals as a patient, we will record information about you such as name, address, ethnicity, GP, and about the visit and its outcomes. The information we keep is only accessed by staff authorised to see it. The Trust is bound by law to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and by the NHS Confidentiality Code of Practice. Every member of staff signs a confidentiality clause as part of their employment contract. The Trust does share limited information e.g., names, addresses and telephone numbers with third party suppliers who support our services such as the call/text reminder service. These contracts are also governed under the law.

If at any time you would like to know more about how we use your information, please write to the Trust's Caldicott Guardian at the address below:

The Caldicott Guardian
Level 4, Management Corridor
East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
Conquest Hospital
The Ridge
St Leonards-on-sea
East Sussex
TN37 7RD