



Understanding Cancer Waiting Times

A decade ago only 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 (14 days) standard

Patients referred urgently by their GP (or Dentist) should be seen at the hospital within 14 days.

1 month wait (31 days)

First treatment standard

Patients should receive their first treatment within 31 days of *agreeing* the treatment plan with their hospital specialist.

2 month wait (62 days)

First treatment standard

Patients should receive their first treatment within 62 days of their urgent GP or national screening programme referral. Note that for acute leukaemia, children's cancer and testicular cancer, the standard from urgent GP referral to first treatment is 31 days.

2 month wait (62 days)

First treatment standard for Consultant Upgrades

Patients who are upgraded by their hospital specialist, should receive their first treatment within 62 days of being upgraded.

1 month wait (31 days)

Subsequent treatment standard

Patients should receive all subsequent surgical and drug treatments (eg. Chemotherapy, Hormone therapy) within 31 days of being clinically fit to receive treatment.

Looking Ahead

From Jan.2010 all patients referred with breast symptoms should be seen urgently (within 14 days) whether cancer is suspected or not.

From Jan.2011 the 1 month wait subsequent treatment standard will be expanded to all types of cancer treatment (eg. Surgery, drug treatment, radiotherapy etc).

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NHS Cancer Waiting Times effective from January 2009

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 -

Department of Health:
www.doh.nhs.uk

NHS Direct:
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

