

Outpatient services

Answers to frequently asked questions

Updated 8 June 2015

Our Trust offers a range of outpatient services across four hospital sites:

- [Hertford County](#)
- [Lister](#)
- [Mount Vernon Cancer Centre](#)
- [New QEII](#)

Outpatient services are supported by contact centres based at the Lister and Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.

Each outpatient clinic is managed by an outpatient sister who is supported by a mix of registered nursing staff, healthcare assistants and reception staff.

To help with any queries or questions that you may have about the service or your outpatient appointment, we have prepared the following frequently asked questions:

When will I know when my appointment is?

Where will my appointment be?

How will I remember when my appointment is?

How do I change or cancel my appointment?

Do I need to confirm my appointment?

How do I know where to go for my appointment?

How do I get to the hospital?

What should I bring with me to the consultation?

Can the hospital provide an interpreter?

Can I bring someone with me?

How long will my appointment be? and how long will I have to wait to be seen on the day?

Do I need to stop taking my medication?

Are there toilets near the outpatient clinic?

Can I use my mobile phone in the clinic?

Can you buy food and drink in the outpatient clinic?

What will happen during the consultation?

What should I ask the doctor or nurse? Is it OK to bring a list of questions with me, and write down the answers?

What will happen after my appointment?

Can I receive copies of my letters?

Who can I talk to if I have questions about a letter I receive?

I need to make some amendments to my personal details/my relatives' personal details. How do I do it?

Can I bring my children with me to my appointment?

How do I contact you if I have other questions?

How can I give feedback on my experience of the outpatient service?

Useful contact numbers

If your query is not covered by these questions, then you can also contact us by telephoning the contact centre or the specialty clinic using the telephone number on your appointment letter.

You will find a list of useful contact numbers at the end of this information.

When will I know when my appointment is?

Once you have been referred to the hospital we will arrange an appointment for you and you will receive notification of this through the post. We usually send out the details of your appointment within 8 weeks of receiving your referral and are working hard to send them sooner where possible.

Where will my appointment be?

It is important to remember that we have hospitals at four different locations and some appointments are only held at a particular hospital. This means that you may have to travel to that site.

You will be sent an appointment letter giving you all the details of the day, time, hospital and clinic location and any special instructions that are necessary for you to prepare for your appointment.

How will I remember when my appointment is?

To help patients remember their appointment details we have introduced an appointment reminder system. Patients will receive either a text message reminder or an automated call message reminder depending on what contact details they have registered with the hospital. These are sent out up to 10 days prior to your appointment.

Please make sure that we have your mobile phone number so we can text you reminders.

How do I change or cancel my appointment?

We understand that the date or time of your appointment may not be the most convenient for you. However, we would ask you to be as flexible as possible. It will help us to ensure you are seen as quickly as possible and by the correct doctor.

You can cancel or change an appointment in two ways:

- By using our [online cancellation form](#)
- By telephoning the contact centre, or the specialty clinic, using the telephone number on your appointment letter.

Please note that patients who cancel two consecutive appointments are usually discharged back to the care of their GP.

Do I need to confirm my appointment?

You do not need to telephone us to confirm your acceptance of your appointment. In most cases, you will receive a reminder call or text just prior to your appointment and this will ask you to confirm whether you will be attending.

How do I know where to go for my appointment?

When you arrive for your appointment you should go to the clinic on your appointment letter. To help you find your way around the hospital we have maps available which you can access by clicking below

- [Hertford County Hospital Site Map](#)
- [Lister Hospital Site Map](#)
- [Lister Hospital Wayfinding Map](#)
- [Mount Vernon Cancer Centre](#)
- [New QEII Hospital](#)

If at any time you are unsure of where to go, please ask a member of staff or the volunteer team who you will see wearing yellow shirts, to help answer any queries.

How do I get to the hospital?

For information on car parking, public transport and directions, please click on the hospital you are going to below:

- [Hertford County hospital](#)
- [Lister hospital](#)
- [Mount Vernon Cancer Centre](#)
- [New QEII hospital](#)

There are a range of services available to help you get to one of our hospitals which you can access via the [Herts Travellink website](#).

What should I bring with me to the consultation?

Please bring your appointment letter with you as this will help the receptionist check your details. It will also tell you where to go to help you find the correct outpatient clinic.

We will need your personal details including your current address and telephone number along with your GP's details, so please have these to hand.

Your letter might ask you to arrive slightly before your appointment. This is to allow any pre-clinic work to be done, e.g. a nurse might need to measure your weight or you might need to attend for a scan. This will be explained in your letter as well as whether you need to bring any samples with you.

If you are entitled to free prescriptions or help with travel, remember to bring along confirmation of this with you.

You may also be asked about any medicines that you are currently taking. Please bring a sample of your current medicines (in their original container if possible) to the

appointment including medicines that you have bought yourself and any alternative medicines.

Can the hospital provide an interpreter?

A request for an interpreter must be made before the date of your clinic appointment. This request should be included in your GP referral letter. The Trust will then make the arrangements for you with a telephone translation service which will be accessed once you are in the consulting room.

Can I bring someone with me?

Yes. Visiting hospital can be an anxious time and it can help to have a trusted friend, relative or carer with you for help and support during the appointment.

How long will my appointment be and how long will I have to wait on the day?

The appointment time will depend on the clinic you are being seen in, your individual needs and whether it is your first appointment or a follow up appointment. We cannot guarantee how long your appointment will take, so please allow plenty of time. As a guide, a first appointment usually lasts 20 minutes and a follow-up 15 minutes.

You will have a designated time slot for your appointment and we aim to see you within 30 minutes of this. You may on occasion have to wait longer than this as other people's appointments can overrun or the doctor might be called away to help in an emergency elsewhere. We are sorry if this happens to you, and hope that you will understand that sometimes events outside our control can mean there may be delays.

We will ensure that you are aware of any waiting times with the nursing and administrative staff informing you both when you arrive and whilst you are waiting.

We advise that you leave plenty of time for your appointment, especially if it is your first visit. If necessary, please make appropriate arrangements at home before you come to the hospital. For example, you may need to ask a friend or relative to collect your children from school.

Do I need to stop taking my medication prior to my appointment?

You should *not* stop taking any prescribed medication unless advised to do so in your appointment letter or by your GP. If you have any queries about this, please contact your consultant's secretary via the Trust's switchboard on 01438 314333.

Are there toilets near the outpatient clinic?

All of our outpatient clinics have toilets, with wheelchair access and baby changing facilities, nearby. If you need to use these facilities, please let your receptionist know in case you are called for your appointment during this time.

Can I use my mobile phone in the clinic?

In general, we would prefer you not to use your phone while in the outpatient areas as it can be annoying for other patients waiting. If you need to use your mobile phone on while in the clinic please put it on 'silent' or 'vibrate'.

Can you buy food and drink in the outpatient clinic?

There are various refreshment facilities available at each hospital site. These are outlined below with the current opening times:

Lister Hospital:

- **Coffee shop at main entrance** – open Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 7.00pm; Saturday and Sunday, 10.00am to 5.00pm
- **Coffee lounge (near main lifts)** – open Monday to Friday, 7.30am to 3.00pm
- **Restaurant (level two, near main lifts)** – open for breakfast, Monday to Friday, 7.30 to 10.00am; and lunch Monday to Sunday, 12.00 to 2.00pm
- **WH Smiths retail outlet** – open Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 8.00pm; Saturday, 9.00am to 7.30pm; and Sunday, 9.00am to 7.00pm
- **Vending Machines are situated in the following areas:**
 - Food vending – main entrance, A&E, coffee lounge, maternity
 - Hot drinks – main entrance, A&E, coffee lounge, maternity, Strathmore wing reception
 - Cold drinks – main entrance, A&E, coffee lounge, maternity, Strathmore wing reception, opposite G4S office level 2.

New QEII Hospital:

- **Café** – from mid July 2015, there will be a café on the ground floor of the new hospital

Hertford County Hospital:

- **WRVS Café** – open Monday to Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm

Mount Vernon Cancer Centre:

- **Restaurant** – open 7.00am to 8.00pm
- **Café by the Treatment Centre** – open 7.00am to 5.00pm

What will happen during the consultation?

After you arrive and have seen the receptionist to check in you will be asked to take a seat in the waiting area.

The clinic nurse will let you know when the doctor is ready to see you. The nurse may also carry out some provisional tests, such as testing your urine or measuring your blood pressure. Doctors, nurses, therapists and clerical staff all work within the outpatient areas and can be identified by their identity/security badges.

Your doctor or nurse will then call you into the consultation room. You should be ready to explain your current problems as well as your clinical history. Your GP should have sent your records to the hospital but on occasion this is not the case.

You should inform the doctor if you are pregnant, have any allergies or are taking any medications and we advise that you bring a sample of your current medicines with you, including medicines you have brought yourself and any alternative medicines.

Your consultation will be individual to you but, as a minimum, the following things should be explained to you during your consultation:

- what might be wrong

- whether you need any tests
- what treatment(s) is best for you
- what happens next and who to contact

What should I ask the doctor or nurse? Is it OK to bring a list of questions with me, and write down the answers?

We advise patients that it can be helpful to make a list of all the things you want to ask on the day as some patients find it hard to remember at the time of the consultation. This helps you to get the most from your appointment.

NHS Choices have produced a useful guide called *Questions to ask the doctor*, which can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

You are very welcome to bring a list of questions and make notes during your consultation to help you remember what has been discussed or bring someone along with you. Often there is a lot of information to digest and this allows you to refer back to them after you have left.

What will happen after my appointment?

If you need further tests or investigations the clinical staff will explain this to you and what you need to do and whether a further follow-up appointment is required.

You will be given a clinic outcome form which you should take to the outpatient reception desk before leaving the department as this forms records what had been done and what needs to happen next.

If you need a follow-up appointment, it is usually possible for this to be made at the outpatient reception desk and an appointment letter will be printed for you. However there may be occasions when this is not possible. Please be assured that you will be added to the waiting list and contacted in writing at a later date if this is the case.

Can I receive copies of my letters?

You should receive a copy of your doctor's letter to your GP with a summary of your consultation. This may take 2-3 weeks to arrive.

Who can I talk to if I have questions about a letter I receive?

Each letter will be written by a member of your consultant's team. If you wish to discuss the contents of a letter please contact the consultant's secretary via the Trust switchboard on 01438 314333.

I need to make some amendments to my/my relatives personal details - how do I do it?

It is important that we know if your contact details have changed. You should inform your GP immediately of any changes to you/your family's personal information, including address and telephone number amendments. We use the same contact information as your GP so any amendments made at your GP Practice can be accessed here at the Trust.

You will be asked to check your personal details at each hospital appointment and so any changes can also be made at this time.

Can I bring my children with me to my appointment?

Clinics can be extremely busy and the waiting areas in some clinics are small with limited seating. Given that it is possible that you may also experience a longer wait than expected, or may require tests, it is advisable not to bring children to your appointment if at all possible.

How do I contact you if I have other questions?

You can call the contact centre on 01438 284444 if your query relates to an outpatient appointment in the following specialties:

- Breast surgery
- Cardiology
- Dermatology
- Diabetics/endocrinology
- ENT
- Gastroenterology
- General surgery
- Gynaecology
- Haematology
- Neurology
- Paediatrics
- Respiratory
- Trauma and orthopaedics
- Urology

For other specialties, please see the list of useful numbers below.

How can I give feedback on my experience of the outpatient service?

We always welcome feedback on our services and patient care. If you would like to contact us regarding your feedback please click on the relevant link below:

- [Concerns and Complaints](#)
- [Compliments and suggestions](#)

Useful contact numbers

- Ante-natal clinic: 01438 286031
- Anti-coagulant appointments: 01438 285335
- Blood tests (phlebotomy): 01438 285529 / 284044
- Breast care nurses – New QEII: 01707 224856 (to 15 June 2015)
- Breast care nurses – Lister: 01438 284221
- Cancer nurse specialist (gynaecology): 01438 284580

- Cancer nurse specialist appointments (gynaecology): 01438 286176
- Cardiology diagnostics: 01438 284765
- Cardiology test appointments: 01438 284765
- Cardiology pacemaker appointments: 01438 285018
- Cardiology catheterisation laboratory reception: 01438 285912
- Cardiology private patients: 01438 285912
- Colposcopy appointments: 01438 286717
- Colposcopy results: 01438 286174
- Colposcopy specialist nurse: 01438 286062
- Elderly care: 01438 284272
- Obstetrics: 01438 284650
- Ophthalmology – adults (Treatment Centre) – 01438 735205
- Ophthalmology – children (Treatment Centre) – 01438 735201
- Plastic surgery appointments: 01438 284279
- Radiology: 01438 284030
- Renal: 01438 285533 / 284915
- Respiratory nurses: 01438 285621
- Urodynamics appointments: 01438 286172