

**Patient
Information**

Rapid Access Skin Assessment Clinic

Introduction

You have been referred to the Rapid Access Skin Assessment Clinic by your GP. Your GP may have attached photographs to the referral which will have been reviewed by a consultant dermatologist at the hospital.

At the Rapid Access Skin Assessment Clinic, we will look at or treat a skin lesion. A skin lesion is a part of the skin that has an abnormal growth or appearance compared to the skin around it. Our priority is to confirm or rule out a diagnosis of skin cancer. This leaflet gives you information about the clinic and how it runs.

About the Rapid Access Skin Assessment Clinic

The clinic aims to quickly give a diagnosis and treatment to patients with new or changing lesions that may be skin cancer.

The clinic has a team of health care professionals including dermatologists (skin specialists), dermatologic surgeons (skin specialists trained in skin surgery) and cancer nurse specialists. There is also a team of outpatient nurses who are here to help you during your clinic visits.

Please feel free to ask us any questions you may have about your skin and why you have been referred to the clinic.

Why have I been referred to the clinic?

Patients are usually referred to the Rapid Access Skin Assessment Clinic because there is a concern about a single lesion, but as part of our screening we offer all of our patients a full skin check.

If your GP took photographs of your skin lesion, these will have been assessed by the dermatology consultant and it has been decided that you need to be seen at the hospital within 28 days.

Reference No.

GHPI1440_08_24

Department

Dermatology

Review due

August 2027

**Patient
Information**

How long will I wait to get an appointment?

We aim to provide quick access to our clinic for patients with suspected skin cancer and see patients who have been referred within 28 days.

We try to match the number of doctors and nurses in the clinic to the number of patients attending. This is to help reduce any delays.

As it is our aim to see urgent referrals within 28 days, our clinics are often busy. We are sorry if you have had any delays in getting an appointment, but we will do our best to see you as soon as possible.

What will happen in the clinic?

When the doctor is ready to see you, a nurse will ask you to go into the consulting room. If you would like a full skin check you will be asked to undress so that the doctor can examine all of your skin. If you would rather not have a full skin check, or if you would like another member of staff to be present, please let the doctor know.

How will you make a diagnosis?

Sometimes a diagnosis is made after examining your skin, but often we need to take a sample (skin biopsy) to make an accurate diagnosis.

If the doctor examining you decides that a biopsy is needed to help with the diagnosis or skin surgery to treat a lesion, we will try to offer this during your assessment appointment. If we are unable to do this, then another appointment will be arranged for the earliest available date.

A skin biopsy is carried out with local anaesthetic injected around the area where the sample will be taken. This is similar to the procedure used by dentists.

Stitches are often needed after a biopsy. Before you leave the department, you will be given written aftercare advice about how to look after your wound. You will also be informed when and where the stitches will need to be removed.

**Patient
Information**

How long will I wait to be seen in the clinic?

The demand for the clinic appointments and biopsies is high. This can mean there may be a wait to see a doctor or for a skin biopsy. We will try to see you as quickly as possible but apologise if you experience any delays.

If you are offered a biopsy, but feel you cannot wait, please tell the doctor so that another appointment can be arranged.

Why do I need a biopsy?

We will take a biopsy of any lesion where it is not possible to make a clinical diagnosis by only examining your skin.

We treat all skin cancers and pre-cancerous lesions but we cannot usually treat benign (non-cancerous) skin lesions. Your dermatologist or GP will explain your options for the treatment of benign lesions.

What happens after a surgical procedure?

When the result of your biopsy is received, your hospital doctor will decide if a follow-up appointment is needed. If needed, you will receive a letter with the appointment details which is normally 4 to 6 weeks after your first procedure. Please try to attend any follow-up appointment offered as our clinic slots are always in demand. If you are unable to keep the appointment, please contact the Booking Office to rearrange. The contact number will be on your appointment letter.

Can I get my result by telephone?

We do not give results over the telephone. If you are contacted by telephone with a follow up appointment, please do not ask the caller about your biopsy result. The person calling will be an administrator who has been asked to book your appointment. The caller will not have been told the result or why you need to come back for a follow-up appointment.

Patient Information

If you are offered a follow up appointment, it is because the doctor feels it is important to see you again. Do not be concerned as many patients who have had skin surgery are offered follow-up appointments. This may be because the doctor wishes to discuss the biopsy results with you, examine your skin again, to arrange more tests or to offer you treatment.

Follow-up

Most patients are not routinely given follow-up appointments.

If you have had skin cancer surgery, we are likely to contact you at a later date to offer a follow-up appointment.

In some cases of low-risk skin cancer surgery, you may be given a Patient Initiated Follow Up (PIFU) appointment as an alternative. This gives you the opportunity to contact us if you have any concerns about your scar during the next 6 to 12 months.

It is important that you let us have your up-to-date day time telephone number, as we may need to contact you at short notice.

What do I do if I have not been contacted about a follow-up?

Usually, our patients will have been told about any follow-up plans within 4 weeks of their procedure.

If you have not heard anything after 4 weeks, please contact your consultant's secretary at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

Contact information

Booking Office

Tel: 0300 422 4506

If you have any worries or concerns following your clinic appointment, please contact your consultant's secretary. The secretary's phone number will be at the top of your clinic letter.

Patient Information

Alternatively, you can contact:

Gloucestershire Hospitals Switchboard

Tel: 0300 422 2222

When prompted ask for the operator then for your consultant's secretary.

Content reviewed: August 2024

Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>