

A guide to Rapid Referral Clinic Rapid Referral Service, Children's Outpatients

This information is for parents and carers of children who have been referred to Rapid Referral Clinic. It is designed to give you information about the clinic, how it works and answers some common questions.

What is Rapid Referral Clinic?

Either your GP, or the doctor you saw in A&E, thinks that your child needs to be seen by a paediatrician within 4 weeks for a specialist opinion. The doctor doesn't think your child needs to go to A&E or be admitted to hospital for emergency treatment. However, they feel the problem is such that your child cannot wait 6-8 weeks for a routine outpatient appointment with a paediatrician.

Who will my child see?

First, a paediatric nurse will weigh and measure your child. Then you will see a paediatric doctor. This will usually be a doctor called a Registrar, who is near the end of their specialist paediatric training. They are qualified doctors with some years of experience working with children. Because different doctors cover the clinic to make sure it can run every week, it is usually not possible to request a specific doctor.

Is Rapid Referral Clinic the same as a normal outpatient clinic?

You will still be seen at an appointed time. You will be seen privately by a doctor who has access to your child's hospital notes. Your child will receive treatment they need. So in many ways it's the same.

The big difference is that we aim to assess, investigate and treat urgent problems only. This means that we don't follow up many patients in this clinic, as our appointments are reserved for new patients with urgent problems.

If the doctor seeing you thinks your child may need more hospital appointments, they might refer you on to another Consultant. They will arrange any tests or treat any urgent issues first. However, usually they will offer advice to you and your GP on how to treat the problem and ask your GP to check whether treatment is working.

Which Consultant is responsible for Rapid Referral Clinic?

Dr Sarah Thurlbeck and Dr Luci Etheridge are the paediatric consultants in charge of the clinic. Dr Etheridge is present in clinic on Wednesdays and is the named doctor responsible for your child's care, although you may not see her personally.

All patients seen in the clinic are discussed with Dr Etheridge or Dr Thurlbeck after the clinic. If they feel any changes need to be made to your child's treatment plan, the doctor who saw you will ring you to discuss this with you.

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Will my child need any tests?

The doctor who sees your child may think that they need some tests, usually blood tests, x-rays or scans. They will discuss this with you and explain to you how to get these done. Some may be able to be done today. Others might need a booked appointment, which will be sent in the post.

How will I find out the results of my child's tests?

After every appointment the doctor who saw you writes a letter to your GP explaining the assessment, diagnosis and plan. You will get a copy of that letter. The doctor will put any test results that are available in the letter, with an explanation of what they mean. You should expect to receive this within 10 working days of your appointment.

Any results that take longer will be sent to the doctor, who will send them on to you and your GP when they are ready.

We generally ask for a phone number so that we can ring you to discuss any test results that may change your child's treatment plan. However, we are unable to ring for every test result.

Will my child be prescribed any medicines?

The doctor who assesses your child may think that they need some medicines straight away. If this is the case, they will discuss these with you and give you a prescription for the St George's Hospital pharmacy. You will have to collect that in the hospital.

If the doctor thinks the medicine doesn't need to be started right away, they will ask your GP to prescribe it for you. In this case, you will be able to get it from your local pharmacy.

Who can I ask if I have more questions?

If you have any questions today, please ask the nurse or doctor that you see and they will be happy to help you. We value feedback from parents, so please let us know if you have any comments or concerns.

After your appointment, if you have questions or worries, please contact Dr Etheridge's secretary, Steve Clemo, on 0208 725 2926.

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