

# Health Rights – Waiting Times

NHS Lothian is committed to reducing waiting times and ensuring patients are seen as soon as possible. The time you will wait will depend on your condition and the service you have been referred to. For some specialties patients may have to wait for up to 12 weeks or more. Many patients will be seen sooner than this but unfortunately this is not possible in every case.

## What are the waiting time guarantees?

The Scottish Government has different waiting time guarantees that should be met and these include:

- Your first appointment in outpatients
- Tests like endoscopy, CT scan and ultrasound
- Treatment – like an operation.

Most patients should start treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. For more information visit: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/waiting-times> opens a new window

To help you understand how long you may have to wait in NHS Lothian for an outpatient appointment, we publish information on current waiting times for main specialties on these pages.

The waiting times information is based on the number of weeks it took for 9 out of every 10 patients to be seen following referral to an NHS Lothian outpatient waiting list. This information provides an overview of the time it may take for a patient to be seen and varies depending on the speciality. The majority of patients will have to wait fewer weeks than is represented in the table.

[NHS Lothian Outpatient Waiting Times](#)  
[NHS Lothian Inpatient Waiting Times](#)

If, while you are waiting for an appointment your circumstances change, your symptoms get worse or better, please contact your GP.

## What should I do if I cannot come at a certain time?

If you know, for example, that you are going on holiday, please let us know as soon as possible and we will make sure you do not get offered an appointment during that time.

Your waiting time will pause until you are available again. If this is longer than 24 weeks, you will be removed from the list and we will ask that you are referred again when you are available.

## How will I get my appointment?

You will get an appointment letter or a letter asking you to phone and arrange an appointment. You will usually be offered the next available appointment, at any of our sites in NHS Lothian or one of our healthcare partners. We are working with healthcare partners to help us see everyone as soon as possible.

We will give you at least seven days' notice of this appointment. Please consider your appointment carefully because if you refuse two reasonable offers of appointment, we may send you back to the person who referred you to us, e.g. your GP / dentist, and your waiting time may start again.

If you are asked to confirm an appointment, please make sure you do this. If you do not confirm your appointment it could be offered to someone else.

Your letter and any leaflets we send you should give all the information you need. Please read them carefully and contact us if you have any questions. Please tell us if you change your name, address or phone number to make sure we can contact you.

## What should I do if I cannot attend my appointment?

If you cannot make your appointment please phone and tell us as soon as possible. We can then give that appointment to someone else who needs it and arrange a new appointment for you. If you cancel an agreed appointment your waiting time will start again.

# What happens if I do not attend my appointment?

If you have not told us you cannot attend, you might be removed from the waiting list. A letter will be sent to you and your referrer to explain this.

All of the above information is contained in a patient information leaflet called '[Your hospital waiting times explainedopens a new window](#)' and is available here. Copies are also available in:

- [Polishopens a new window](#)
- [Mandarinopens a new window](#)
- [Urduopens a new window](#)
- [Arabicopens a new window](#)
- [Turkishopens a new window](#)

## Local Access Policy

The [Local Access Policyopens a new window](#) outlines NHS Lothian's approach to waiting list management. This describes the offers of appointments that will be made to patients and how a patient's waiting time may be affected by cancellations or any times when a patient is unavailable to come in for an appointment. It also includes the sites both within and out with NHS Lothian at which appointments may be offered to patients.