

Specialist Outpatient Clinics – Referrals, Waiting List and General Information

What are specialist clinics?

The Northern Adelaide Local Health Network's (NALHN) outpatient clinics provide access to specialised medical, nursing and midwifery and allied health services, as well as associated diagnostic testing. Operating across all NALHN sites (including Lyell McEwin Hospital, Modbury Hospital, GP Plus Elizabeth and GP Plus Super Clinic Modbury and Gilles Plains) these services are available to people who are not currently admitted to hospital.

How do I get an appointment at a specialist clinic?

Patients are referred to specialist clinics by general practitioners (GPs) or other specialist doctors. Sometimes patients are referred for follow up after being treated in an emergency department or hospital. Once we have received your referral, the specialist clinic staff will prioritise your appointment based on the information the referring doctor has provided about your condition. You might receive an appointment date straight away or be placed on a waiting list to receive an appointment at a later date. The specialist clinic will contact you and your referring doctor with information about the outcome of your referral. This usually occurs within 14 days of receipt of your referral.

How long should I expect to wait for my appointment?

Waiting times for appointments vary across specialties and health services depending on the level of demand. If you are concerned about managing your condition while you wait for an appointment, you may wish to speak to the doctor who referred you and discuss options available to you. Your GP is usually the best person to manage your health until you are seen by one of our specialists. NALHN uses the following classifications to triage/assess referrals:

<u>TRIAGE ASSESSMENT/CATEGORY</u>	<u>DEFINITION</u>	<u>PATIENT INFORMATION</u>
QUICK ACCESS	See within the week	You will be contacted via phone by the department
URGENT	See within the month	You will be contacted via phone by the department
SEMI-URGENT	Aim to see within three months	You will be sent a letter informing you that you have been either placed on a waiting list, or you may be asked to contact the department to make an appointment
NON-URGENT / ROUTINE	See when an appointment becomes available	You will be sent a letter informing you that you have been placed on the waiting list. If you do not hear from the department about an appointment within 12months, you are advised to return to your GP for a review of your condition. Any changes should be communicated by your GP to the department via an updated referral.

Please contact your GP if you are concerned about your condition. Your GP should advise the specialist clinic staff if your condition is deteriorating. Your GP may be able to suggest treatments to assist you while you are waiting to see the specialist.

In an emergency, you should dial 000 for an ambulance or attend an emergency department.



How will I be notified about my appointment?

You will receive a letter or phone call from the specialist clinic offering you an appointment when one becomes available. You may also receive other letters relating to your appointment. For example, some doctors may request that you have special tests completed prior to your appointment, such as x-rays or blood tests.

What do I do if my contact details change?

It is important that you phone or write to the specialist clinic if you change your address or phone number. This will ensure the clinic can continue to contact you.

What information will I receive from the specialist clinic?

- > **Area phone number** - you will receive a phone number to call if you have any questions about your appointment.
- > **Patient identification number** - you will receive a designated patient identification number. When you call the hospital or GP Plus centre, you may be asked to quote this number. This enables staff to view your appointment history and answer your questions more efficiently

What if I have special needs?

Hospitals may be able to assist patients with special needs when attending their clinic appointments. If you are hearing or visually impaired or need an interpreter, it is important that you notify the specialist clinic prior to your appointment so assistance can be arranged for you.

How do I change my appointment?

If you need to change your appointment please contact the specialist clinic as soon as possible. Staff will be able to move your appointment to a date or time more suitable to you, although this might mean a longer wait for you. Please notify the clinic as soon as you are aware that you are unable to attend. If you miss appointments without notifying the specialist clinic, you may need to obtain a new referral from your GP.

What do I do if I no longer need or want my appointment?

If you no longer need your appointment, please notify the specialist clinic. You can help to reduce waiting times for other patients by making sure you let the clinic know if you can't attend or no longer need your appointment.

What are the hours for specialist clinics?

Most specialist clinics are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and are closed on public holidays. Particular clinics may run on a specific day and time of the week.

What do I need to do before my appointment?

Before your appointment, please ensure that you:

- > obtain any test results needed for your appointment
- > make a list of any medications or dietary supplements that you take
- > write down any questions that you have for the health professional you will be seeing (it is often helpful to do this beforehand)
- > read the Appointment Information fact sheet (insert link to 3b) to understand your responsibilities in your outpatient care.

What if I need a medical certificate?

You should ask the doctor during your appointment for a medical certificate if you require one.

How many times will I need to attend the specialist clinic?

The number of appointments you will need will depend on the reason for your referral. The clinician you see will discuss how many times you will need to attend the clinic.

You will be discharged back to the care of your GP or another community service when you no longer need to attend the specialist clinic. A letter will be sent to your GP or other service provider about the care that you have received from the specialist clinic.

How long is my referral to the specialist clinic valid?

Your referral to the specialist clinic may not be valid indefinitely, and the specialist clinic staff may ask you to go back to your GP or referring specialist to get your referral renewed.

What if I don't have a GP?

All patients are encouraged to have a GP. While specialists deal with a specific aspect of your health, usually for a limited period of time, it is important to have someone who knows about all of your health needs.

The GP is usually the first person you see when you want help or advice about a health condition, and the person who will help you to manage your health when you either no longer need specialist care or are in-between specialist visits. This can be very important in helping you stay well and making sure any new health problems or complications are diagnosed and treated as early as possible.

What should I do if I have concerns about the specialist clinic service?

You are invited to provide feedback about the care or service you receive in any part of the hospital or GP Plus centre. This may be in the form of a compliment or a complaint. Consumer Advisors will work with you to find a resolution to any complaint, or, if necessary, investigate the matter further. Consumer advisors are available throughout the health service, and their name and phone number can be provided to you upon request.

Consumer Advisor – Lyell McEwin Hospital

Haydown Rd, Elizabeth Vale SA 5112

Telephone: (08) 8182 9658

lmhconsumeradvisor@sa.gov.au

Consumer Advisor – Modbury Hospital

Smart Rd, Modbury SA 5092

Telephone: (08) 8161 2551

modconsumeradvisor@sa.gov.au

What should I do if I require further information about anything related to specialist clinics?

You can contact the specialist clinic staff through the hospital switch board or directly on the phone number listed on the letter you receive from the specialist clinic.

For more information:

Northern Adelaide Local Health Network

Modbury Hospital: 8161 2000

Lyell McEwin Hospital: 8182 9000

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/NALHN



Government
of South Australia

SA Health