

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Oral Surgery Referrals

Your dentist should be able to carry out most extractions suitable to be carried out under local anaesthesia (a numbing injection in the gum). They should also be able to treat patients who are taking oral bisphosphonates, or taking blood-thinning drugs such as warfarin and aspirin, provided a few simple precautions are observed.

However, there are many procedures, which demand a greater degree of clinical skill to undertake e.g. removing impacted wisdom teeth. Some medical conditions do necessitate a greater degree of clinical skill to carry out extractions, or they need to be carried out in a hospital environment or a specialist run clinic.

These patients and procedures that cannot be seen and treated in general practice, have historically always been referred to their local hospital (secondary care) to see a member of the Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery team

This is not always the most appropriate place for patients to be seen and treated. There are an increasing number of specialists in Oral Surgery who are working in primary care. This is either alongside a general dental practitioner in a high street dental practice or in a clinic often located in a local community hospital.

The Department of Health and the commissioners who work for NHS England are trying to reduce the number of patients that are treated in secondary care and increase the number of patients seeing specialists in primary care

The advantage of patients being seen in primary care is that

treatment is often closer to home and time from referral to treatment is often significantly less than the referral to treatment times for secondary care. An additional benefit to the local health economy is that treatment in primary care is usually significantly cheaper, but is of the same high quality.

In order that patients are identified to receive the most appropriate treatment in the most appropriate place, referrals from general dental practitioners are often sent to a central referral bureau. Here the referrals are assessed (triaged) by dental or oral surgery specialists for difficulty of procedure and appropriateness, before being sent on to the treatment providers.

Why do referrals get held up?

Unfortunately, referring dentists can leave vital bits of information off the referral form, fail to send an x-ray film which shows the tooth that needs treating, or the film that they have taken is not of a good enough quality.

“I’ve been told I’ve got to go to a treatment Centre a long way away from my dentist and even further away from where I live- Why is this?”

Because of commissioning rules you are only entitled to receive treatment from a primary care specialist under the NHS in the area covered by the Clinical Commissioning Group with whom your MEDICAL DOCTOR is registered. Your dentist may be in one county, perhaps closest to where you work, yet you live in a neighbouring county and that is where you have registered with a doctor.

The same locality rules do not apply if treatment is deemed appropriate to be seen in hospital (secondary care)

Can I insist on being seen at my local hospital?

You cannot insist on being seen at your local hospital. Treatment is not necessarily safer or carried out to a higher standard just because you are seen in a hospital. Your local hospital also may not receive the funding or the specialists needed to treat your particular dental condition.

You may be able to appeal against a “triaging” outcome. A successful appeal is usually more likely when your dentist is able to supply extra details about your health or dental condition, which justifies being seen in secondary care.

There may be social reasons why a hospital may be a more appropriate location at which to receive treatment, for example, hospital transport can only be booked to travel to your local hospital but not to the “high street” surgery. Treatment might need to be coordinated around other hospital treatment e.g. kidney dialysis

In summary, the more detailed the referral by your dentist, the more likely your referral results in your treatment happening in the right place, with the least delay.