



From December 2011, the maximum time you'll have to wait for hospital treatment will be 18 weeks from when your GP refers you to the hospital. We call this **the 18-Week Referral to Treatment Standard**.

But this doesn't mean you'll have to wait the full 18 weeks to be seen at the hospital.

**Most patients - especially those who need urgent treatment - will be seen very quickly.**

It's helpful to think of your waiting time as a "clock". The minute the hospital gets the referral letter from your GP, your waiting-time clock starts ticking.

The hospital must then ensure that your treatment is started within the 18-week period.



GP Referral

Your waiting-time clock can be paused for a while if necessary, or can be reset to the beginning of the 18-week wait. Here's how it works.

🕒 You've seen your GP, who refers you to the hospital. When the hospital receives the referral, your 18 week waiting-time "clock" starts ticking.

🕒 But what happens if you aren't available for a period of time for a good reason - work commitments, illness or a pre-arranged holiday, for instance? If you let the hospital know, your clock will be "paused" at that point and will restart when you become available again.

🕒 If you cancel an agreed appointment or admission, your clock will be reset to the beginning of the 18-week wait. You'll then be offered further new date(s). If you cancel or do not attend the next agreed appointment or admission, the hospital might refer you back to the care of your GP until you're ready to start.

18 weeks

Work on preparing the ground for introducing the 18-Week Referral to Treatment Standard by December 2011 is already under way.

Between now and 2011, NHS Boards will be working to reduce waiting times for patients on a step-by-step basis.

These reductions will be for first outpatient consultations, diagnostic tests and hospital treatment.

Speak to your GP if you need more information about your waiting time or are unclear about what will happen to you. If you're under the care of a hospital, staff there should also be able to help.

Patient Treatment

