

Rapid Access Skin Assessment Clinic

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Introduction

You have been referred to the Rapid Access Skin Assessment Clinic for us to look at and/or treat a suspicious skin lesion. A suspicious skin lesion is a part of the skin that has an abnormal growth or appearance compared to the skin around it. Our priority is to confirm or rule out a diagnosis of skin cancer. This leaflet gives you information about the clinic and how it runs.

About the Rapid Access Skin Assessment Clinic

The clinic aims to quickly give a diagnosis and treatment to patients with new or changing lesions that may be a skin cancer. The clinic has a team of health care professionals including dermatologists (skin specialists), dermatologic surgeons (skin registered nurse specialists trained in skin surgery), cancer nurse specialists and healthcare support workers. There is also a team of outpatient nurses who are here to help you during your clinic visits.

Please feel free to ask us any questions you may have about your skin and why you have been referred to the clinic.

How do I get an appointment in the clinic?

You can only be referred to the clinic by your GP. Patients without an appointment cannot be seen.

If you are concerned about a skin lesion, report it to your GP straight away. Your GP will assess you and if they have any concerns they can refer to a specialist clinic.

How long will I wait to get an appointment?

We aim to provide quick access to our clinic for patients with suspected skin cancer by seeing all urgent GP referrals within 2 weeks. As it is our aim to see all the urgent referrals within 2 weeks, our clinics are sometimes very busy. We are sorry if you face any delays in getting an appointment, we will do our best to see you as soon as possible.

What will happen in the clinic?

When the doctor is ready to see you a nurse will ask you to go into the consulting room. Patients are usually referred because there is a concern about a single lesion. The nurse will ask you some questions and a Consultant Dermatologist will examine

you. If you would like another member of staff or chaperone to be present, please let the doctor know.

How will we make a diagnosis?

Sometimes we make a diagnosis by examining your skin with an instrument called a Dermatoscope, but often we need to take a sample (skin biopsy) to make an accurate diagnosis. A skin biopsy is carried out under local anaesthetic and often needs stitches. If the doctor seeing you thinks that you need a biopsy to help with diagnosis, or skin surgery to treat a lesion, we aim to offer this procedure on the same date as your appointment, if it is agreeable with you. Occasionally we cannot offer an appointment for surgery on the same day, so we will offer you an appointment to have your procedure at the earliest available date.

How long will I wait to be seen in the clinic?

We like to offer any biopsies and treatment on the same day because it means that you do not have to come back to the hospital at a later date. The demand for the clinic and for the biopsies is higher on certain days than others, which can mean there is a wait to see a doctor, or for a biopsy. We will try to see you as quickly as possible and are sorry if there are any delays. If you need to have a biopsy, but feel you cannot wait, please tell the doctor seeing you and they will arrange for it to be done another day.

What lesions need a biopsy or treatment?

We take a biopsy of any lesion where it is not possible to make a clinical diagnosis by only examining your skin. We treat all skin cancers and pre-cancerous lesions. We cannot treat benign (non-cancerous) skin lesions.

Will I be given a follow-up appointment?

We aim to diagnose and treat patients on the day of their first appointment where possible. The majority of our patients are not given follow-up appointments. We will contact you and your GP with the results of the biopsy as soon as possible via a letter. We sometimes offer you another appointment if your diagnosis needs to be discussed in detail. It is important that you leave us with your day time telephone number as we may need to contact you at short notice to offer a follow-up appointment.

Can I get my result by telephone?

We do not usually give results over the telephone. If you are offered an appointment by telephone, please do not ask the caller about your biopsy result. The person calling will be an administrator who has been asked to book your appointment by a doctor. The caller will not have been told the result or why you need to come back for follow-up.

I have been offered a follow-up appointment - what does that mean?

Do not be concerned if you are offered a follow-up appointment. Many patients who have had skin surgery are offered follow-up appointments. This may be because the doctor wishes to discuss the results with you, or to look at your skin again, would like to arrange more tests or to offer you treatment. We try not to offer appointments that are not needed. If you are offered an appointment, it is because the doctor feels it is important to see you again.

Contact number for Lincoln secretaries: 01522 573680/307991/707236

Contact number for Boston secretaries: 01205 446091/446238

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