

Non-Site Specific Symptoms of Concern Pathway

A rapid diagnostic pathway for patients with non-specific symptoms of concern

Patient Information Leaflet

**Introduction**

Your GP has invited you to be investigated by the Non-site specific (NSS) pathway. This leaflet is designed to help you to understand why the pathway is in place and what it will involve.

NSS is part of a national programme to find the quickest, most efficient way to reach a diagnosis in patients who have non-specific symptoms.

This leaflet is designed to tell you more about the purpose of the NSS pathway, and what will happen **over the next 2 weeks** when you get referred by your GP. For a rapid diagnosis it is important that you make yourself available for all appointments.

Please take time to read the following information carefully. Should you require any further information, please speak to your GP.

Contact details for the Hospital team are displayed on the back of this leaflet.



**What is the purpose of the NSS Pathway?**

Many patients visit their GP with vague or general symptoms such as weight loss and tiredness. These symptoms are called “non-specific”, as they affect the whole person. Often the cause of these symptoms remains unclear after your GP has assessed you. These “non-specific” symptoms may sometimes be caused by a serious disease, such as cancer but the risk of this is very low.

Your GP has assessed you to have one or more of the “non-specific” symptoms for which NSS has been developed.

There could be a number of reasons for these symptoms and although the risk of serious disease is low, there are some patients for whom, early tests could help make a diagnosis quicker and treatment started sooner.

This pathway is designed to give GPs a quick and efficient way to access this full group of tests for patients with “non-specific” symptoms.

**What will I have to do when on this pathway?**

When you and your GP decide to refer using the NSS pathway, your GP will give you this information leaflet and a poo collection pack for you to collect a sample. You will also be asked to attend for some blood tests.

Your GP will send the Hospital team detailed information about your clinical problem – your symptoms, examination findings, medical history, and any recent test results. You will be called to discuss an appointment for tests and review by the NSS team:

*within 2 weeks of referral by your GP*

Following your first call, the clinical information received from your GP and all of your test results will be reviewed by the NSS team.

The next step will be **one** of the following:

* Refer you back to a Hospital Specialist or NSS clinic

or

* Arrange any further tests needed which will be within 2 weeks

or

* Refer you back to your GP for advice.

**If you have a CT scan**

Please do not eat anything for 3 hours before your appointment. If you have a medical condition where your doctor has told you not to go without food for several hours, please contact your Navigator to discuss this. You will need to drink a large quantity of water or squash over a relatively short period of time. This enables us to visualise your bowel on the CT scan.



**Drinking instructions**

1. Please drink 1 litre of water or squash 2 hours prior to your examination time
2. You will be asked to drink a further 2 cups of water whilst meeting your Clinical Navigator
3. You are free to empty your bladder as needed.

A CT scan is carried out by using a special x-ray machine, which produces pictures of a cross-section or slice of the body. The scanner is of open design, not a tunnel.

**Before your scan starts**

Please inform a member of staff immediately before the start of your scan if you are allergic to anything.

You will be given an injection with a type of dye (known as contrast) into a vein in your arm during the scan. This will help us see the blood supply to the area we are scanning.

On very rare occasions some patients may experience a reaction to the dye, which may include symptoms such as itching or a rash, nausea, headache or dizziness.

For this reason, you will be asked to remain in the department being monitored for 20 minutes following the contrast injection.

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| **SUMMARY OF NSS PATHWAY** |
| When you see your GP | Your GP will: |
| * Make a referral to the NSS pathway
* Give you this information leaflet
* Give you **a poo sample pack** to be returned to the practice
* **Arrange for you to have some blood tests**
 |
| Appointments at the hospital | The next appointment will most likely be one of the following: |
| * Further tests if required to make a diagnosis, or
* A specialist clinic at one of the Hospital sites with a member of the NSS team
 |

**Follow-up**

Your follow-up care will be decided by the Hospital NSS team based on your clinical information and test results.

You may require more tests if further information is needed, or a referral to a specialist who will assess you in person. This could be a cancer referral of a referral for another medical condition if this is more likely.

If the results from the CT scan and other tests do not indicate that further hospital tests or treatment are needed, the NSS team will write to your GP.

**Patient experience feedback of the NSS Pathway**

We may ask you to complete a questionnaire about your experiences of the NSS Pathway to help with planning of future services for patients.

**Useful telephone numbers:**

Royal Devon and Exeter: 01392 411611

NSS team number - 07584 506328

If you are asked to attend any appointment at the hospital we are happy for you to bring someone with you. This is often helpful when new information is being discussed and also if further tests need arranging.

If you have not received an appointment within 7 days of your GP referral or if you need to change the planned phone call date/time then please call the Navigator Office 07584 506328 as soon as possible.

**How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?**

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have injection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand rub (special gel) available at the main entrance of the hospital and at the entrance to every ward before coming in to and after leaving the ward or hospital. In some situations, hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand rub. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

[www.rdehospital.nhs.uk](http://www.rdehospital.nhs.uk)

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