

Patient information

Why is there sometimes such a long wait?

Introduction

When you have an appointment for the clinic or the day unit we do our best to make sure that we keep to time. Sometimes however, there are some unavoidable delays. The receptionist or nurse will let you know what the reason for the delay is whenever possible and roughly how long it will be before you are seen. Information boards showing any delays are displayed in the outpatient waiting area.

We apologise for any inconvenience a delay may cause but we hope that by letting you know why this sometimes happens you can understand the problem.

Clinic appointments

Clinic appointments are made with the doctor or nurse in order to check your progress, discuss treatment plans and your health generally. For a first appointment, 25 minutes is allocated and 5 minutes admin time, follow up appointments last for about 15 minutes but all appointments can sometimes be longer or shorter. If there is a lot to discuss some appointments may over run.

The doctors and nurses who see you in clinic are often also on call to deal with patients admitted to hospital as an emergency. They carry a bleep to alert them of these calls. As you would expect, if this happens they must leave clinic straight away. The amount of time each call out can take may vary. This can lead to delays in clinic.

We realise this is difficult for patients and their families waiting to be seen but we hope that you will understand the reason for this delay. At future appointments you may find it helpful to bring with you books to read, magazines, puzzles, iPad's etc in case appointments are running late. We have provided some magazines in the waiting area. Hot drinks are available from the machine (price £1.60) together with a

water cooler.

In the summer months you may prefer to sit outside to wait in the garden area. There is also a shop on site so that you can buy refreshments and reading materials if you want to. Sometimes the WRVS mobile shop visits the waiting area.

You might also find the extra time useful to visit the Cancer Information and Support Centre situated in the outpatient waiting area, where there is a vast amount of information to help you and someone to talk to if you need some support.

Sometimes when the clinic re-starts appointment times can catch up quite quickly so it is important that you **tell the receptionist or clinic nurse if you decide to leave the waiting room.** If you have been in the unit for more than 3 hours, please go to the day unit and give them your registration number, by doing this you will be able to get a reduced rate for your parking.

Chemotherapy and other day unit appointments

As chemotherapy is planned in advanced it is usual that appointments run to time however, there can be times when treatment is late due to unforeseen circumstances.

Chemotherapy cannot be given until a blood test result indicates that it is safe to do so. If the results of the tests are delayed for any reason it is not safe to continue until these are known.

Getting chemotherapy treatment to the patients needing it is a complex procedure. The way it gets from your prescription to you in the day unit is described below.

The dose is prescribed by a consultant and then measured according to your body mass index (calculated using your height and weight measurements). These, together with your blood test results, are given to the pharmacy department where specially trained pharmacists located in a separate clean area, and wearing gowns, gloves and masks make up the specific doses. The preparation of your treatment takes a lot of care and checking. Staff may have to change their garments several times to make sure that the drugs are safe to use.

Some chemotherapy has a very short shelf life and so once made up must be given immediately. Also chemotherapy is extremely expensive (over £1000 per dose) so we must be absolutely sure that the patient is fit for treatment and located in the Macmillan Unit before it can be made up by the specialist pharmacists.

As you can imagine preparation of the drugs within the pharmacy department may cause unavoidable delays, but please be assured that all efforts are made to prevent this.

Please go to the day unit if you have been in the unit for more than 3 hours and give them your registration number, by doing this you will be able to get a reduced rate for your parking.

Questions about your appointment

If you have any questions about delays with your appointment time please ask the receptionist or nurse. They will keep you informed to the best of their knowledge.

Please ask at reception if you need to telephone to inform a friend or relative who may be collecting you from the hospital that you have been delayed.

At all times we place the interests of our patients first.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the hospital website www.wsh.nhs.uk and click on the link, or visit the disabledgo website:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>