

Patient referrers - Frequently Asked Questions

Specialist Outpatient Waiting Time Report

From 1 July 2018, a Specialist Outpatient Waiting Time Report will be made available on the SA Health [website](#).

What is the SA Health Specialist Outpatient Waiting Time Report?

The Specialist Outpatient Waiting Time Report (the Report) provides information about the median and maximum waiting time for a specialist outpatient appointment by specialty at each metropolitan public hospital in South Australia.

The Report includes information for reported outpatient specialties and the patients waiting for an appointment at those specialties at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Lyell McEwin Hospital, Modbury Hospital, Flinders Medical Centre, Noarlunga Hospital and Women's and Children's Hospital. More services may be reported in the future.

To find out the median and maximum waiting time for a range of specialist clinics, see the Report at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/OutpatientWaitingTimes.

Is the Report accurate?

Specialist outpatient waiting times have not been regularly reported by SA Health before. Outpatient reporting is a challenge because different hospitals have different ways of collecting and reporting this information. Therefore the information may not be accurate, but it is the best information we have at the moment.

As an example, on some outpatient waiting lists there may be patients waiting for an appointment who no longer need it because they have already seen a doctor or a private specialist elsewhere. If this occurs and the hospital does not know the patient has been seen, they remain on the waiting list making the list inaccurate. It then takes more time for other patients to be given a first appointment.

What is SA Health doing to improve the accuracy of the report?

SA Health is working with clinicians and administrative staff to improve the accuracy of waiting list and develop an outpatient reporting system that will provide timely and consistent information about outpatient waiting times for metropolitan specialist clinics.

With thousands of referrals in different systems across SA Health, this is a large task and may take some time. Until then, hospitals will continue to review their outpatient waiting lists to confirm that patients on the list still require their appointments to improve to information reported.

Why was the average waiting time information for Flinders Medical Centre and Noarlunga Hospital not included in the first Report?

Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN) have a joint waiting list for Flinders Medical Centre and Noarlunga Hospital. The average waiting time data was not available for Flinders Medical Centre and Noarlunga Hospital at the time of publishing the first report.

SALHN median and maximum waiting time data is now available by hospital and will be included in all future Reports.



What is SA Health doing to ensure patients are seen in a timely manner?

SA Health is committed to delivering the best care and services to the South Australian community.

We are working with clinicians and administrative staff to review outpatient waiting list information to learn what is causing delays for patients and to put plans in place to reduce the time it takes for a patient to have an appointment based on their clinical need. In some services this may mean looking at different ways to provide services.

What should I do if my patient has been on a waiting list for 12 months or more?

Hospitals regularly review patient referrals on specialist outpatient waiting lists. You may be contacted if your patient has been waiting for an appointment longer than 12 months to review them to ensure their condition is the same and they still need an appointment.

If, following a review, your patients' medical condition has changed an updated referral noting the changes in their condition should be sent to the hospital outpatient clinic. A clinician will reassess the clinical urgency of the referral. This may mean your patient will get an appointment sooner or remain on the waiting list depending on their assessed clinical need.

Outpatient referral process

All patients require a valid referral prior to receiving treatment in an outpatient clinic. Referrals must be submitted in writing and must include:

- > current patient demographic information and contact details
- > date of referral and the duration of the referral
- > referring practitioner contact details
- > referring practitioner's provider number
- > signature of the referrer
- > general practitioner contact details (if not the referring clinician)
- > Workcover/Motor Vehicle Accident/Department of Veterans Affairs information (where relevant)
- > comprehensive reason for referral
- > requirement for interpreter services
- > alerts to infectious status, allergies or communicable diseases that may affect other staff and patients being treated in the same vicinity
- > relevant summary information on the patient's medical history, including current medications and allergies
- > investigations and treatment undertaken
- > relevant psycho-social issues.

In some instances additional clinical information may be required to supplement the information to ensure timely and appropriate decision making.

All referrals received by outpatient clinics will be reviewed to determine the clinical urgency of a patient's condition. All appointments are scheduled based on patient clinical need.

Outpatient referral process (continued)

It remains the responsibility of the referrer to monitor the patient's medical condition while they wait for their specialist outpatient appointment. It is important the hospital is made aware of any significant changes in the patient's condition which may change their clinical urgency category.

It is important you notify, or ask the patient to notify, the hospital if the outpatient appointment is no longer needed. This ensures our waiting lists remain accurate.

For more information visit www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/OutpatientWaitingTimes

For more information

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