

Information about the Specialist Outpatient Waiting Time Report

SA Health offers many different types of outpatient services at public hospitals, GP Plus Health Care Centres and community clinics.

The waiting time to be seen in some outpatient services are now available on the SA Health website.

You can see the waiting times in the *Specialist Outpatient Waiting Time Report*.

Visit www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/OutpatientWaitingTimes

Frequently Asked Questions

- > What is the Specialist Outpatient Waiting Time Report?
- > Which outpatient services can I see waiting times for?
- > What are outpatient services?
- > How do I get put on an outpatient waiting list?
- > What is waiting time?
- > What is 'median' waiting time?
- > How long are waiting times for appointments?
- > What is 'clinical urgency' and how is it decided?
- > Does the Report tell me how long I have to wait to be seen?
- > What should I do if my condition changes?
- > What should I do if I have been on a waiting list for 12 months or more?
- > Why is it important that I contact the hospital if I no longer require my appointment?
- > Where do I go for more information?



What is the Specialist Outpatient Waiting Time Report (the Report)?

The Report shows the median, and maximum time a patient may have to wait for some outpatient appointments.

The information supports you and your doctor to make informed decisions about your treatment options.

Waiting time information is currently available for reported outpatient specialties at the following hospitals:

- > Royal Adelaide Hospital
- > The Queen Elizabeth Hospital
- > Lyell McEwin Hospital
- > Modbury Hospital
- > Flinders Medical Centre
- > Noarlunga Hospital
- > Women's and Children's Hospital

To see the waiting times for certain outpatient appointments, see the [Specialist Outpatient Waiting Time Report](#).

Which outpatient services can I see waiting times for?

You can currently see waiting times for reported types of outpatient speciality services.

Each outpatient service provides care and treatment for different types of patient conditions.

Examples of what each outpatient speciality service does can be found on the [SA Health website](#).

The Report will be updated every three months. More outpatient specialty services may be added to the Report in the future.

What are outpatient services?

'Outpatient services' is the name given to a range of clinics that each hospital has for planned procedures, consultations or tests.

These services take place at public hospitals, GP Plus Health Care Centres and community clinics. These appointments do not require an overnight stay.

Outpatient services could be:

- > Assessments – for example, scans or laboratory tests
- > Treatments – for example, a procedure or chemotherapy
- > Chronic disease management – for example, diabetes monitoring
- > Prevention and education services – for example, counselling or lifestyle advisors

When you attend your specialist outpatient appointment, the specialist health team assess your condition and decide on the best course of treatment with you.



How do I get put on an outpatient waiting list?

In most cases, you need a current referral from a health professional, usually a medical practitioner.

Your referral will contain important information about your condition. The referral will help the hospital decide how urgently you need an appointment.

When an appointment becomes available, the outpatient clinic will contact you to arrange a suitable appointment time.

What is waiting time?

The outpatient waiting time starts when your referral is received by a SA Health outpatient service.

Your referral will be assessed by a clinician who will decide how urgently you need to be seen. Then, you may be either given an appointment or you may be added to an outpatient waiting list.

Once you are given an appointment or 'scheduled' you will no longer be waiting to be given an appointment and will not be identified in this Report.

What is 'median' waiting time?

The median is the half-way point (50%) of the waiting times information between the longest and shortest waiting times. Therefore, 50% of patients would be waiting less and 50% would be waiting more than the median waiting times provided in the Report.

The median waiting times are considered a more accurate measure because some people will have very short waiting time or very long waiting time and this can make the average measure less representative of actual time most people will wait for an appointment.

How long are waiting times for appointments?

The time you may have to wait for an outpatient appointment depends on the type of service you need and how urgent your condition is.

The waiting time also depends on how many other patients are waiting for an appointment and how urgent their needs are.

Patients with the most urgent needs are seen first:

- > If a patient's condition is urgent, an appointment may be given as soon as the referral has been assessed.
- > If a patient's condition is non-urgent, they may be added to a waiting list for an appointment.

What is 'clinical urgency' and how is it decided?

'Clinical urgency' is the term used by hospitals to decide who should be seen first based on their condition.

A clinician decides how urgent your condition is by looking at:

- > If your condition is life threatening or could deteriorate quickly and may become an emergency
- > How much pain, dysfunction or disability you are experiencing.

The waiting times in the Report do not include urgent referrals that need to be seen by a clinician within 30 days.

The waiting times reported are for 'routine' or non-urgent referrals for an appointment.

Does the Report tell me how long I have to wait to be seen?

The waiting times are just an example of how long you may have to wait for an appointment.

Each outpatient specialty included in the Report has a number of different clinics. Each clinic will have different waiting times, which you cannot see in the Report.

In all cases, the maximum waiting time represents the time one individual patient has waited as per the date of the Report.

What should I do if my condition changes?

If there is a change in your condition while you are waiting for an outpatient appointment, you should return to your doctor for a review or seek medical advice.

Your doctor may provide updated information after reviewing you. They will send this to the outpatient service for a clinician to review how urgently you need to be seen.

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

If you have been on an outpatient waiting list for an appointment for 12 months or more, you should visit your doctor for a review or to discuss treatment options.

If there is a change in your condition before 12 months, you should return to your doctor for a review or seek medical advice.

Why is it important that I contact the hospital if I no longer require my appointment?

If your situation changes and you no longer need an appointment, it is very important for you to tell the outpatient service.

This helps us to make our outpatient waiting lists accurate. We can take your name off the waiting list so other patients can get their appointments sooner.

For example, you may have had treatment in another hospital or seen a private specialist.

It is also important you tell the outpatient service if your contact details change so they can contact you when an appointment is available.

Where do I go for more information?

For more information speak with your doctor or visit:

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/OutpatientWaitingTimes



For more information

**Operational Service Improvement and
Demand Management**
Level 8, 11 Hindmarsh Square
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

Public-I1-A1

© Department for Health and Ageing, Government of South Australia. All rights reserved.



www.ausgoal.gov.au/creative-commons



**Government
of South Australia**

SA Health