

# What happens next?



*You have been referred to hospital for some tests that might result in a diagnosis of cancer. This booklet briefly explains what might happen to you and who to contact with any concerns.*

Providing support for patients and their families at the  
Royal Sussex County Hospital and the Princess Royal Hospital

## What happens next?

Many people at some point in their lives develop symptoms that might be coming from an underlying cancer. To try and find out if this is the case, you have been referred to this hospital and need to undergo some tests.

This leaflet aims to explain the process and pathway, what might happen next and who to contact if you have any concerns.

Most of the people investigated in this way will have a benign (non-cancerous) cause for their problem.

Along the way we may need to do other tests and consider all the test results in a *Multidisciplinary* meeting where *Specialist Cancer Surgeons*, *Pathologists* (who interpret biopsy results), *Radiologists* (who interpret scans), *Oncologists* and *Specialist Nurses* (doctors and nurses specialising in cancer) all review your results and make recommendations about the best treatment options for you.

### Tests may include:

#### Biopsy

This is when a doctor removes a small sample of cells from your body to check whether they are normal or not. The cells will be examined under a microscope by pathologists.

#### Blood tests

To check the levels of blood cells, proteins and other chemicals in your blood. This can help provide vital clues about your general health. A small number of cancers make proteins that can be detected in the blood (tumour markers).

#### Scans

These are used to build up detailed images of the inside of your body. They can help doctors see what might be wrong. Some scans work by using x-rays (CT scan) and others use magnetism (MRI scan), sound waves (ultrasound) or mildly radioactive chemicals (bone scan or PET scan). Before your scan you might need to drink or have an injection of a liquid dye. This helps to show up parts of your body more clearly on the scan. Scans are usually painless but may be slightly uncomfortable. Not all scans are suitable for everyone, and some scans may have instructions that you must follow before they can be done. The doctor or nurse will discuss each scan with you.

## Getting your results

Depending on the tests you're having, your results will take one to four weeks, to be analysed and discussed by the Multidisciplinary Team, a group of Specialists.

## Waiting for your results

Waiting for results can be a difficult time and you may need additional support:

If your symptoms worsen or you are worried please contact your GP.

You will also find good information on the NHS Choices Web site:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cancer/>

You will find contact details for the Hospital Macmillan Teams on the back page. We have given you these numbers so you can contact the team if you are particularly worried or concerned. The Hospital Macmillan Teams support people from the point of confirmed diagnosis of cancer throughout their treatment and care 'pathways'.

Usually, you will be offered an appointment to get your test results, when a specialist doctor or nurse will explain what they mean. If the tests have found a cancer you will be told about the type of cancer you have and about any treatments you may need. Further tests and investigations may need to be done to find out more about the cancer before decisions are made about the most suitable treatment.

Remember, you can ask questions if you don't understand something and you can make notes to help you remember when you're at home, and can also ask for a copy of the letter that will be sent to your GP. It is always a good idea to take a friend or family member with you for when you are getting results or for most hospital appointments as they may also be able to help you remember the things that were said.

Sometimes the results of the tests and investigations are inconclusive and it's not possible to tell whether you have cancer or not. In this case, tests may need to be repeated straight away or you may need to come back in a few months to be tested again. The doctor or nurse can discuss this with you.

## If you are diagnosed with cancer

Having these tests does **not** mean we have **confirmed** you have cancer, however we have concerns that this may be the eventual diagnosis.

If you find out that you have cancer it can be a shock, even if you've

suspected it. Cancer is a word that can stir up all sorts of emotions, which is often a normal and understandable reaction. The team looking after you will try to get results and other information to you as quickly as possible. If you are diagnosed with cancer or are **particular** worried or concerned you could call the Macmillan Hospital Team.

## Useful Contact Numbers

**Royal Sussex County** 01273 696955 (RSCH)

**Princess Royal Hospital** 01444 441881 (PRH)

**CT Department:** RSCH Ext. 64926 PRH Ext. 8329

**MRI Department:** RSCH and PRH Ext. 64575

**Endoscopy bookings:** RSCH and PRH 01273 696955 Ext. 3995  
or 0300 303 8517

**Out Patients Dept.** 0300 303 8360

**Macmillan Support Workers:** 01273 696955 Ext. 67658 or 67864

**Macmillan Horizon Centre:** Email: [horizoncentre@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:horizoncentre@macmillan.org.uk)  
01273 468 770

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/getting-support/local-information-centres/horizon-centre.html>

**Your notes/questions:**

**CIP info here:**

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### Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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