

# Central Adelaide Local Health Network

## Specialist outpatient clinics-

### Frequently asked questions

#### What are specialist outpatient clinics?

The Central Adelaide Local Health Network's (CALHN) specialist outpatient clinics provide access to specialised medical, nursing and allied health services, as well as associated diagnostic testing. Operating across all CALHN sites (including Royal Adelaide Hospital, and The Queen Elizabeth Hospital) these services are available to people who are not currently admitted to hospital.

#### How do I get an appointment at a specialist outpatient clinic?

Patients must be referred to a specialist clinic by their general practitioner (GP) or other specialist doctors. Some patients will be referred for follow up after treatment in an emergency department or after a hospital admission. After your referral has been received a specialist clinician will review the referral information and prioritise the urgency of your appointment based on the information provided about your condition. You may receive an appointment straight away or be placed on a waiting list for an appointment at a later date. Both you and your referring doctor will be contacted with information about the outcome of your referral.

#### How will I be notified about my appointment?

You will either receive a letter or phone call from the outpatients department offering you an appointment when one becomes available. You may also receive other letters relating to your appointment. For example, some doctors may request that you have special tests completed prior to your appointment, such as x-rays or blood tests.

#### How long should I expect to wait for my appointment?

Waiting times for appointments vary across clinic specialties depending on the level of demand. If you are concerned about managing your condition while you wait for an appointment, you should speak with your GP or the doctor who referred you and discuss treatment options. Your GP is usually the best person to manage your health/condition until your specialist outpatient appointment.

CALHN uses the following classifications to triage/assess referrals:

TRIAGE ASSESSMENT/CATEGORY	DEFINITION	PATIENT INFORMATION
QUICK ACCESS	See within the week	You will be contacted via phone to book an appointment
URGENT	See within the month	You will be contacted via phone to book an appointment
SEMI-URGENT	Aim to be seen within three months	You will be sent a letter informing you that you have been either placed on a waiting list. You will be sent a letter once an appointment has been made for you.
NON-URGENT / ROUTINE	Seen when an appointment becomes available	You will be sent a letter informing you that you have been placed on the waiting list. If you do not hear from the department about an appointment within 12 months, you are advised to return to your GP for a review of your condition. Any changes should be communicated by your GP to the outpatients department via an updated referral.

Please contact your GP if you are concerned about your condition or your condition changes. Your GP should communicate new clinical information relating to your condition should it deteriorate.

In an **emergency**, you should dial 000 for an ambulance or attend an emergency department.

### What do I do if my contact details change?

It is important that you phone or write to the specialist outpatient clinic if you change your address or phone number. This will ensure the clinic can continue to contact you.

### What information will I receive from the specialist outpatient clinic?

- > **Area phone number** - you will receive a phone number to call if you have any questions about your appointment.
- > **Patient identification number** - you will receive a designated patient identification number. When you call the hospital, you may be asked to quote this number. This enables staff to view your appointment history and answer your questions more efficiently.

### What if I have special needs?

Hospitals may be able to assist patients with special needs when attending their clinic appointments. If you are hearing or visually impaired or need an interpreter, it is important that you notify the specialist outpatient clinic prior to your appointment so assistance can be arranged for you.

### How do I change my appointment?

If you need to change your appointment please contact the outpatients department as soon as possible. Staff will try to assist you to move your appointment to a date or time more suitable to you, although this may mean a longer wait for you. Please notify the clinic as soon as you are aware that you are unable to attend.

### What happens if I miss my appointment?

If you miss appointments without notifying the outpatients department your appointment may be cancelled and you may need a new referral.

### What do I need to do before my appointment?

Before your appointment, please ensure you:

- > obtain any tests results needed for your appointment
- > make a list of any medications or dietary supplements that you take
- > write down any questions that you have for the health professional you will be seeing (it is often helpful to do this beforehand)
- > bring your Medicare, pension, health care, veterans, PBS safety net and private health care cards

### What if I need a medical certificate?

You should ask the doctor during your appointment for a medical certificate if you require one.

### How many times will I need to attend the specialist outpatient clinic?

The number of appointments you will need will depend on the reason for your referral. The clinician you see will discuss your treatment plan. You will be discharged back to the care of your GP or another community service when you no longer need to attend the specialist

outpatient clinic. A letter will be sent to your GP or other service provider about the care that you have received from the specialist clinic.

### How long is my referral to the specialist outpatient clinic valid?

Your referral to the specialist clinic may not be valid indefinitely, and the specialist outpatient clinic staff may ask you to go back to your GP or referring specialist to get your referral renewed. If your referral has been assessed as non-urgent, for some services there may be a lengthy wait. It is suggested you visit your GP at least annually regarding your referral condition to discuss treatment options, monitor your condition, and ensure that a new referral can be sent if your condition has deteriorated.

### What if I don't have a GP?

All patients are encouraged to have a GP. While specialists deal with a specific aspect of your health this is usually only for a limited period of time; it is important to have someone who knows and keeps records about all of your health needs and history.

The GP is usually the first person you see when you want help or advice about a health condition, and the person who will help you to manage your health when you either no longer need specialist care or are in-between specialist visits. This can be very important in helping you stay well and making sure any new health problems or complications are diagnosed and treated as early as possible.

### What should I do if I have concerns about the specialist outpatient clinic service?

You are invited to provide feedback about the care or service you receive in any part of the hospital. This may be in the form of a compliment or a complaint. Consumer or Patient Advisors will work with you to find a resolution to any complaint, or, if necessary, investigate the matter further. Consumer or Patient Advisors are available throughout the health service and their name and phone number can be provided to you upon request.

Consumer or patient advisor:

Royal Adelaide Hospital

T: (08) 7074 1377

E: [rah.consumeradviser@sa.gov.au](mailto:rah.consumeradviser@sa.gov.au)

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital

T: (08) 8222 6464

E: [rah.consumeradviser@sa.gov.au](mailto:rah.consumeradviser@sa.gov.au)

### What should I do if I require further information about anything related to specialist clinics?

You can contact the outpatient department phone hub:

Royal Adelaide Hospital

T: 1300 153 853

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital

T: (08) 8222 7020

**Central Adelaide Local Health Network**  
**Royal Adelaide Hospital: (08) 7074 0000**  
**Port Road, Adelaide**  
**The Queen Elizabeth Hospital: (08) 8222 6000**  
**Woodville Road, Woodville South**  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au)