

# SPECIALIST ADVICE FOR SKIN CONDITIONS

## INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS AND CARERS



### WHAT IS SPECIALIST ADVICE?

GPs and other primary healthcare professionals often get expert advice from a range of medical specialists to discuss the most appropriate, individual care for a patient. They do this before a patient is referred for an appointment with a specialist team, if that is needed.

GPs can diagnose and treat some skin conditions. However, sometimes they may wish to seek expert advice from a skin specialist. This might be a hospital specialist (or a member of their team), or a doctor working in the community – such as a GP or dermatology nurse – who has undertaken additional training in skin conditions. The GP and the skin specialist will work together to decide if you should continue to be cared for by your GP, or if you need to be referred to a specialist skin service.

This process makes sure your skin condition is treated by the most appropriate healthcare professional as quickly as possible. This also helps avoid any trips to hospital that may not be needed.

### HOW DOES MY GP CONTACT THE SPECIALIST?

Your GP will contact a specialist through a referral system, by email or on the phone. Your GP may use the term 'advice and guidance' when describing the process of seeking specialist advice. This is the NHS name for this process.

Photographs of your skin will usually be needed. Where photographs are taken, they are only taken with explicit patient consent. All images are handled securely and saved to the GP record. If it is not appropriate to take photographs, a safe alternative will be discussed with you.

These will be reviewed by the specialist to help support assessment and diagnosis.



## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If photographs of your skin condition are needed these should be of good quality and will either be taken by you (with clear information provided on how to take a good picture), or by the GP or GP surgery. Occasionally you may be asked to go to a local community skin service where these can be taken for you using a special camera. The photographs will then be sent securely to the specialist. Photographs will only be taken with your consent and you will be given information about what happens to the images after they have been reviewed.

The skin specialist will carefully review all the information and either contact your GP with individualised advice on how to manage your care, or they will decide you should be referred to a hospital or clinic and offer you an appointment.

Your GP will discuss with you the outcome of this referral and the advice they have received from the specialist, including advice on treatment whilst you are waiting to be seen. Either the GP surgery or the specialist team will contact you to arrange an appointment if a referral to a specialist team is needed. They will also discuss with you what choices there are for where you can be referred.



## WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T GIVE CONSENT FOR PHOTOGRAPHS TO BE TAKEN?

If you do not consent to having photographs taken, then the GP will discuss with you and the specialist what the next steps should be. If it is not appropriate to take photographs, a safe alternative will be discussed with you.

## WHAT IF I DON'T HEAR FROM ANYONE?

We aim to provide specialist advice as promptly as possible to support your treatment plan. If your wait feels longer than expected, please get in touch with your GP Practice for an update.

If four weeks have passed since your GP consultation and you haven't received any information, please contact your GP Practice.

You can use the NHS app to see the advice and guidance request and history. You can also use the App for quick access to medical records, appointments, prescriptions, and trusted health services .

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**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GIVE FEEDBACK ON YOUR EXPERIENCE OF ADVICE AND GUIDANCE, FOLLOW THIS LINK, OR ASK YOUR GP PRACTICE TO GIVE FEEDBACK ON YOUR BEHALF.**

