

# Patient Communication During COVID-19

Patient presents to GP with suspected cancer symptoms



Patient is referred on urgent suspected cancer pathway

**Patient Communication Advice:**

- ✓ Patients should be made aware that they are being referred on an urgent referral pathway for suspected cancer and the patient should be given an [urgent referral patient information leaflet](#) (local patient information leaflets are available).
- ✓ Where this isn't available, advise patients on when they are likely to hear from the hospital, and what to do if they have not heard anything within 2 weeks.
- ✓ Prepare patients for the fact that there may be telephone consultations prior to any face to face appointment and diagnostic tests may be delayed.

Patient is not referred due to level of risk and/or patient concern

**Patient Communication Advice:**

- ✓ Ensure the patient understands why their cancer risk versus COVID-19 risk needs to be assessed and the importance of coming to a joint decision about the next course of action.
- ✓ Check the patient understands the safety netting advice (considering language and literacy barriers) bearing in mind the consultation may be on the telephone.
- ✓ Ensure patient is aware that if their symptoms worsen, they should contact their GP, and if they persist beyond an explicit period of time, they should get in touch.
- ✓ If the patient has chosen not to be referred at that time, inform the patient to contact their GP if they change their mind.

Patient has been referred on urgent suspected cancer pathway but has been downgraded\*

**Patient Communication Advice:**

- ✓ Check the patient understands the safety netting advice (considering language and literacy barriers) bearing in mind the consultation may be on the telephone.
- ✓ Ensure you have up to date contact details for patients who are being held on a safety netting list in practice.
- ✓ Ensure patient is aware that if their symptoms worsen, they should contact their GP, and if they persist beyond an explicit period of time, they should get in touch.

\*[NHS England and NHS Improvement Guidance for Cancer Alliances—information on managing cancer referrals—19th March 2020](#)

## Safety Netting During COVID-19

Patient presents to GP with suspected cancer symptoms



Patient is referred on urgent suspected cancer pathway

Safety Netting Advice:

- ✓ Implement a system to document patients on urgent referral pathway and record how their referral is progressed in secondary care.
- ✓ Record safety netting advice given to patient on GP IT system - include method and type of consultation and record that patient has been referred during COVID-19.
- ✓ Ensure patient contact details are up to date.
- ✓ Maintain and regularly review patients referred to monitor progress of the cancer referral.

Patient is not referred due to level of risk and/or patient concern

Safety Netting Advice:

- ✓ Implement a system to document patients who are not being referred to ensure they are monitored and introduced into the testing/referral system when it is safer to do so.
- ✓ Record safety netting advice given to patient on GP IT system - include method and type of consultation and record that patient has been referred during COVID-19.
- ✓ Ensure patient contact details are up to date.
- ✓ Use GP IT system to set reminders to review patients to see if their symptoms have resolved, continue to persist or worsened.
- ✓ Maintain and regularly review documented patients to track those who are later referred on an urgent referral when safer to do so and to manage those who need referral once risk of COVID-19 has reduced.

Patient has been referred on urgent suspected cancer pathway but has been downgraded\*

Safety Netting Advice:

- ✓ Implement a system to document patients who have been referred and downgraded\* **with the consent of primary care**. The trust will be responsible for holding the patient on their patient tracking list (PTL); however additional safety netting is advisable.
- ✓ Record safety netting advice given to patient on GP IT system - include method and type of consultation and record that patient has been referred during COVID-19.
- ✓ Use GP IT system to set reminders to review patients to see if their symptoms have resolved, continue to persist or worsened.
- ✓ Ensure patient contact details are up to date.

\*[NHS England and NHS Improvement Guidance for Cancer Alliances—information on managing cancer referrals—19th March 2020](#)