

Information for patients

Referrals to the Hospital for Bone, Joint & Pain Issues



Musculoskeletal Assessment & Triage Service (MATS)

You've been given this leaflet as your GP clinic has referred you to the hospital for a specialist opinion.

This leaflet is for people who have been referred to the following hospital services:



Orthopaedics (bone and joint surgeons)



Rheumatology (inflammatory and immune system disease specialists)



Pain Management

What happens next

1. Your referral will be reviewed



Your referral will be assessed by the Norfolk & Waveney Musculoskeletal Assessment and Triage Service (MATS) to ensure it reaches the right clinician or service.



2. Your referral will be processed



After reviewing your referral, the MATS team may:

- Send it directly to the hospital for specialist care.
- Offer you an appointment to discuss your condition in more detail before deciding next steps.
- Redirect your referral to a more suitable service, such as Physiotherapy, Hand Therapy, or the Foot & Ankle Biomechanics Service.
- Contact your GP to request further information before making a decision.



3. What you can expect next



Once a decision has been made, you will be informed of the outcome and told what will happen next.

Frequently asked questions

Who are the MATS (Musculoskeletal Assessment & Triage) Service?

We are a team of specialist musculoskeletal clinicians who specialise in musculoskeletal (muscle, bone, joint & soft tissue) problems.

Why does the MATS team need to review my referral?

Our role is to make sure everyone is seen by the right service, in the right place, at the right time. To do this, we may:

- Offer you an appointment to gather more information about your condition, **or**
- Direct your referral to another service better suited to your needs.

This helps ensure your care is appropriate and efficient.

If my GP has referred me to the hospital, won't this delay things?

No - our involvement is designed to support, not delay, your care. For many people, this means their referral will go straight to the hospital specialists. For others, we may need a little more information before making that decision. If hospital care is the right option for you, our input will not slow down your access to it. Sometimes, we may identify that a hospital referral isn't necessary and that another service can help you more effectively.

How and when will the MATS team contact me about my referral?

We aim to contact you within 24-48 working hours of receiving your referral. You'll be contacted by text message (SMS) or by letter with an update on your referral and details of what will happen next.