

How long will I have to wait for treatment?

Some patients need treatment more urgently than others. For example, people suffering severe pain would generally be treated more quickly than, say, a person with occasional discomfort.

If you are offered publicly funded hospital treatment, you should receive it within six months.

Why is treatment not always available?

Spending on elective services in public hospitals has to be balanced with other health priorities such as maternity services, subsidised drugs and accident and emergency care.

Public hospitals have a set amount of funding for elective treatments and they are obliged to treat those with the greatest need first. Specialists throughout the country use the same national guidelines to help decide which patients require treatment first, so that fair and consistent decisions are made within the resources available.

What if I (or my GP) do not agree with what has been decided?

Talk to your GP. You may ask for an explanation or a second opinion.

Will my GP know the results of my visit to the specialist?

Yes. Your GP will be told the results and whether you have been booked for treatment.

What do I do if my condition worsens?

If at any time your condition worsens you will need to see your GP. Your GP will refer you for a reassessment if they think your condition has changed. A reassessment may include a review of your priority for treatment.

What are my rights?

You have the right to be treated fairly, consistently, and to a high standard under the Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994. If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or wish to make a complaint, you have rights under that Act.

Where can I get more information?

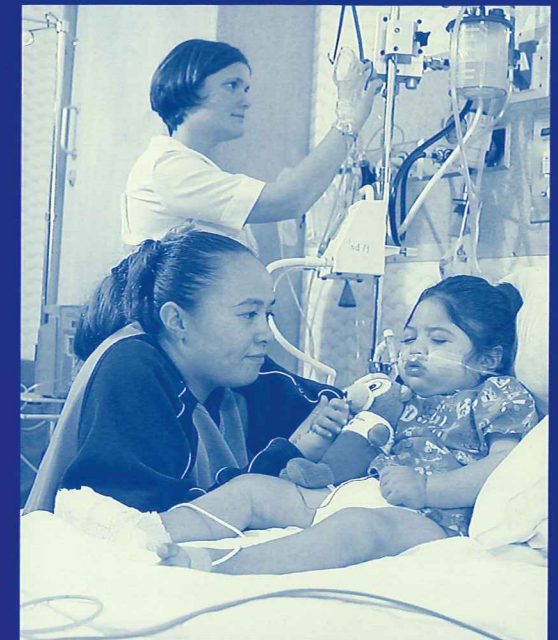
There is a tollfree line for questions. It is 0800 Enquire (0800 367 8473).

If you have any further questions, please contact your GP or your local public hospital.

This brochure is available in six languages: English, Māori, Samoan, Cook Islands Maori, Tongan and Mandarin.

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A Guide To Elective Surgery At Public Hospitals



If you are very ill and require emergency treatment, you will be treated with minimal delay. If your condition does not require immediate treatment, you will receive what is termed elective services. Common conditions in this category include hip joint replacement and cataract surgery.

This leaflet explains how and when you will be treated.

What can I expect?

You can expect:

- ◆ full information about assessment and treatment options, whether they will be publicly funded, and how long you can expect to wait
- ◆ to be assessed on the basis of your level of need and ability to benefit from treatment relative to other people with similar conditions
- ◆ similar treatment throughout New Zealand
- ◆ that those with the most need will receive treatment first.

How do I get an assessment?

If you have a condition that you think may require hospital treatment, your first call should be to your local GP. Only your GP or another hospital specialist can refer you for treatment in a public hospital if they think it is necessary. Your GP will assess your condition and discuss the best option with you, including whether to refer you to a hospital specialist.

If you are referred to a specialist you should be given an appointment within six months. The length of time you wait will depend on how urgent your need is compared with others needing to be assessed or treated. Your GP will care for you during this time and will reassess you if your condition changes before you see the specialist.

What does the specialist do?

The specialist will assess you to determine whether elective surgery/treatment is the best option for your condition. If elective surgery/treatment is not the best option at that time, the specialist will advise you on other options and actions to be taken. Options may include ongoing GP or specialist care and review.

If elective surgery/treatment is the best option, the specialist will use the national guidelines to assist in deciding your ability to benefit from treatment relative to other people in similar circumstances.

For example, she/he may look at how much pain or discomfort you are in, how your condition is affecting your daily life, and how much your condition is likely to deteriorate in the future. Following your assessment you will be told:

- ◆ that you have a firm treatment date within the next six months; or
- ◆ that you will receive treatment within six months and that the treatment date will be provided closer to the time; or
- ◆ that publicly funded elective surgery/treatment is not available to people with your level of need at this time. You will be cared for by your specialist and/or GP who will provide you with a plan of care that includes:
 - probable diagnosis
 - agreed care and treatment plan
 - next action/follow-up planned
 - who to contact if there is a problem.

