Resource #6

Specialist Waitlists & Referrals

What is a Specialist Referral?

Your GP may refer you to a public hospital outpatient clinic or a private specialist if they believe you need specialist care. Waiting times vary depending on urgency, specialty and availability.

Public Hospital Referral Categories

Category 1 – Target within 30 days for urgent conditions.
Category 2 – Target within 90 days for conditions requiring specialist assessment.
Category 3 – Target within 365 days for routine conditions.

These are target timeframes and may vary depending on clinical circumstances and hospital demand.

While You're Waiting

• Ask your GP which priority category you were given.
• Confirm where your referral was sent.
• Make sure your contact details are current.
• Contact the outpatient department if you've been waiting longer than expected.
• If your symptoms worsen, return to your GP. Your referral may need updating or reprioritising.

Can My Referral Be Upgraded?

Yes. If your condition changes, your GP can provide updated clinical information asking the hospital to review your referral priority.

Can I Choose a Private Specialist?

Yes. Ask your GP about private options if you have private health insurance or choose to self-fund.

Remember

If your condition suddenly becomes severe or you develop concerning symptoms, seek urgent medical care rather than waiting for your specialist appointment.

Queensland Hospital Watch
Supporting Queensland patients through information, advocacy and shared experiences.

Disclaimer: General information only. Please seek medical advice for emergencies or contact Queensland Hospital Watch if you need help understanding the available pathways.