



PATIENT INFORMATION: SPECIALIST REFERRAL PATHWAY



This guide explains the referral journey from your GP to a specialist appointment.

STEP 1: **You need to see a specialist**
This might be for tests, treatment, advice, or help with an ongoing health concern.



STEP 2: **Talk with your GP or healthcare provider**
They will decide if a specialist referral is needed and help prepare it for you.



STEP 3: **Your referral goes to the specialist**
The referral tells the specialist why you are being referred and includes important health information.



STEP 4: **Go to your first specialist appointment**
Your referral usually starts from the day you first see the specialist.

What do you take to the specialist appointment?

Bring your referral, Medicare card, and any letters or test results to your appointment.



When should you ask about a new referral?

Are you seeing the specialist for a different health problem?

Yes: Ask your GP if you need a new referral.

No: Your current referral may still be okay.

Are you seeing a different specialist or getting a second opinion?

Yes: Ask your GP for a new referral before your appointment.

No: You may be able to keep using your current referral.

Not sure: Check with your GP clinic or the specialist clinic before your appointment.

Can you choose your specialist?

Does your referral name a specific specialist?

Yes: Ask the clinic if you can see another specialist in the same specialty.

No: You may be able to choose a specialist in that specialty.

Who makes the appointment with the specialist?

Do I need to make the appointment with the specialist?

The ACCHO/Clinic may arrange the specialist appointment on your behalf, though confirm this with the Health Professional/s, and/or the Medical Receptionist. Or they will provide you with the contact details of the specialist contact details to make an appointment that is suitable for you.

How long does a referral last?

Referral source	How long?	What to remember
Your GP	Usually, 12 months	You can usually keep seeing the specialist for the same health issue during this time.
Specialist to specialist	Usually up to 3 months	Check the date before booking follow-up visits.
GP — indefinite referral (ongoing care)	May be ongoing	The referral should clearly say “ongoing”, “continuing” or “indefinite”.

Important: If you are going to a public hospital outpatient clinic as a private patient, your referral may need to name the specialist you are seeing.