

As a result of the pressures on the entire NHS, patients are often seeking to expedite their care by seeing consultants privately. If you choose to avail of private healthcare there are some things you must take into consideration:

What happens if you choose to avail of a consultation with a private consultant?

You must arrange your own private appointment. You may be asked to seek a private referral letter from your GP outlining your conditions. We are happy to provide this, with notice, once you have discussed this with a GP during a routine appointment.

What happens if the private consultant says you need tests or procedures?

If the private consultant advises that you need tests or procedures carried out the consultant is responsible for:

- arranging the test and arranging medication (such as sedatives) that may be required
- providing you with the test results and action plan. You should not contact your GP to discuss the results of tests, (including those carried out in a NHS clinic) organised by a third party, the requestor is responsible for discussing the outcome
- all tests, including blood tests the consultant suggests must be carried out by them - you must be aware that any tests carried out will incur a fee payable to the private consultant/clinic. Your GP surgery cannot perform tests or investigations using NHS resources
- if the consultant tells you to contact your GP to arrange or discuss test results, this is incorrect and you will be directed back to the private consultant

What happens if you need new medication?

If the private consultant decides you need new medication or a change in dose of your current medication the consultant is responsible for either providing a detailed treatment advice slip for you to bring to your GP or a prescription for you to take to a pharmacy. If your GP is able to provide a prescription and the medication falls under the prescribing rules of the NHS, it can take up to 48 working hours to process.

What if the consultant suggests you start on medication which does not fall under NHS prescribing rules, such as some Amber List Drugs, which require frequent monitoring tests (E.G ADHD drugs)?

On occasion private consultants suggest starting medication which is not normally prescribed in the NHS by a GP and requires frequent monitoring and review. This practice, does not issue medication on the Amber Drug List, following a recommendation from a private consultant or an on-line private clinic. Your GP will direct you back to the private consultant as private care must cover all aspects of treatment, including the safe prescribing of medication. Please be aware that the NHS Shared Care Guidelines do not translate over to the private sector.

What if you go abroad to seek private treatment or surgical procedures (such as obesity surgery)?

The Department of Health policy in relation to individuals availing of private healthcare outside of Northern Ireland states that the individual must ensure that all pre and post treatment costs are included in the overall package of care procured from the private healthcare provider. In any such instances, an individual will not be entitled to pre or post treatment support from primary or secondary care services in Northern Ireland. In line with normal practice, patients will be able to access emergency care where necessary.