



# A guide to...

## Non-Specific Symptoms Pathway

*A rapid diagnostic service for patients with Non-Specific Symptoms (NSSP)*

### *Patient Information*

#### **Please contact us**

Clinical Nurse Specialists

**Mobile tel:** 07816 196282

Secretary

**Mobile tel:** 07967278226

Please be prepared to leave a voicemail

**Email:** [westherts.nonspecificsymptoms@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.nonspecificsymptoms@nhs.net)

This inbox is monitored weekdays, please expect a response within 24 hours

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille, or audio version,  
please call **01923 217 198** or email [westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net)



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# **Information about your referral to the Non-Specific Symptoms Service (NSSS)**

## **Why have I been referred to the Non-Specific Symptoms pathway (NSSP)?**

You have been referred to the NSS Service because your GP feels your symptoms urgently need further investigation. There are many conditions your symptoms could be linked to, and these could include cancer or other conditions.

## **What is the purpose of the NSS Pathway?**

Many patients visit their GP with vague or general symptoms such as weight loss and tiredness. These symptoms are called “non-specific,” as they affect the whole person. Often the cause of these symptoms remains unclear after your GP has assessed you.

These ‘non-specific’ symptoms may sometimes be caused by a serious disease, such as cancer but the risk of this is very low.

Your GP has assessed you to have one or more of the “non-specific” symptoms for which the Non-Specific Symptom Pathway has been developed.

There could be several reasons for these symptoms and although the risk of serious disease is low, there are some patients for whom, early tests could help make a diagnosis quicker and treatment started sooner.

This service is designed to give GPs a quick and efficient way to access this full group of tests for patients with “non-specific” symptoms.

Patients who are referred can expect a rapid CT scan and if required further tests or an early appointment with a specialist depending on test results.

## **Does this mean I have cancer?**

Having an urgent referral for a scan does not mean you have cancer and most people referred for an urgent CT scan do not have cancer. It is hoped that having the scan will help to find out what is causing your symptoms quickly, so that you can be treated as rapidly as possible whatever the cause.

## **What happens next?**

After your GP has referred to West Herts Teaching Hospital (WHTH) NSS pathway, you will receive a call from the Paul Strickland Scanner Centre to arrange an appointment for you to have a CT scan.

Please check that your GP Practice has your current contact details including your mobile phone number (if you have one) and your correct postal address.

## **The Paul Strickland Scanner Centre**

The Paul Strickland Scanner Centre is situated at Mount Vernon Hospital. How to get to Mount Vernon Hospital will be discussed when your appointment is booked.

## **Your appointment**

Once you have been given your appointment it is very important that you attend.

You will be offered an appointment within 14 days from the day your GP referred you for the CT scan. When your appointment is booked you will be given information about what to expect at your appointment and instructions on what you will need to do before the scan.

Patients who are unable to travel by private or public transport for medical reasons may be eligible for non-emergency patient transport.

To find out if you are eligible for patient transport, call the patient transport clinical assessment and advice service on 03456 051208 (Monday-Sunday 8am - 6pm).

You may be able to use community voluntary transport schemes, see our [website](#) for more information.

There is also travel information on the Mount Vernon Hospital [website](#).

Please call the Scanner Centre **immediately** on 01923 886311 if you are unable to keep your appointment, you will then need to arrange an alternative appointment.

### **Your test results**

The results from your CT scan and all clinical information received from your GP will be reviewed by the NSS team during the Trust's NSS multi-disciplinary team meeting.

Your case will be discussed by the specialist doctors and nurses and the outcome of this meeting will result in either:

- The receipt of a letter from Hospital explaining the results of your scan and refer back to the GP with advice.
- The receipt of a phone call from the NSS team to book you into a clinic appointment. This will either be face to face at Watford General Hospital or St Albans City Hospital or it will be a telephone call.

The next step will be one of the following:

- Referring you to a hospital specialist or NSS clinic
- Arranging any further tests needed which will be within two weeks
- Referring you back to your GP with advice

### **Questions**

If you have any questions about your referral for an urgent CT scan, please speak to your GP.

### **Follow-up**

If you are asked to attend any appointment at the hospital, we are happy for you to bring someone with you. This is often helpful when new information is being discussed and if further tests need arranging

Your follow-up care will be decided by the hospital NSS team based on your clinical information and test results.

You may require more tests if further information is needed, or a referral to a specialist who will assess you in person. This could be a cancer referral or a referral for another medical condition if this is more likely.

If the results from the CT scan and other tests do not indicate that further hospital tests or treatment are needed, the NSS team will write to you and your GP.

### **Patient experience feedback of the NSSP**

We may ask you to complete a questionnaire about your experiences of the Non-Specific Symptoms Service to help with planning of future services for patients