

## What is Advice & Guidance and how is it used to help patients?

When you see a healthcare practitioner, for example your GP, and they are considering your health and wellbeing, it may be helpful for them to get advice from specialist hospital colleagues for non-urgent issues. Specialists they get advice from might include consultant cardiologists, gynaecologists, diabetes specialists, neurologists, urologists and so on.

For example, your GP may want to get an opinion about your medication and treatment options. They may want to identify the most appropriate test for your care or to discuss test results which have already come back. They may also ask where the best place for you is to get the care you need, including appointments in hospital or at local clinics.

The NHS refers to these sorts of advice conversations as “Advice & Guidance.”

### What does it mean for patients?

Advice & Guidance means that you can have the input of a hospital specialist without having to wait for an outpatient appointment or go to A&E. If you do need to go to the hospital, though, the specialist will tell your GP, and they will make sure you go to the right team in the right place for your care.

### Will this affect my GP appointment?

Your GP can get Advice & Guidance in a number of ways. For example, they can call for Advice & Guidance during your consultation using Consultant Connect – most calls are connected to a senior hospital specialist within 30 seconds.

Alternatively, your GP can write to ask for advice using email, NHS referral systems or messaging. For example, Consultant Connect allows your GP to take a photo of your skin and share it directly with a dermatologist – the photo is then automatically uploaded to your patient record.

### Will I be told what the advice is?

Yes, and it will be included in your patient record. If the specialist has recommended that you attend hospital, you will be referred as normal. Any other treatment and medication recommendations will be managed by your GP, who can issue prescriptions arrange tests and clinic attendances as necessary.

### Can I learn more?

You can find out more here: [consultantconnect.org.uk/patient-experiences/](https://consultantconnect.org.uk/patient-experiences/)

## **This is how clinicians are using Advice & Guidance to get the best care for their patients:**

"I used Telephone Advice & Guidance to contact Haematology and luckily was able to speak to the named consultant for the patient. As she knew the patient already and was able to see the results online, she immediately took over her care and her team contacted the patient and managed everything from there. Had I not used the Telephone Advice & Guidance service I would have had to admit the patient through the Emergency Care Unit (EMU) or Acute Medical Unit (MAU) which would have meant an increased wait for the patient and going through inappropriate services."

"A young female patient came to visit the nurse as she was suffering from excessive prolonged bleeding whilst using progestogen only pill (POP). The patient was unable to use the combined oral contraceptive pill (COC). The nurse used Consultant Connect Telephone Advice & Guidance service to get rapid advice from a local gynaecologist on the most suitable option for the patient."

"A patient with a swollen and painful foot contacted his GP. The GP "asked him to send in some pictures." These images and the patient's history were uploaded to the Consultant Connect platform and shared with a specialist. The GP and the consultant were able to decide on "a full management plan with different steps" which was shared with the patient. The GP and the patient "have started actioning this." The consultant also asked to be kept updated so he could provide further advice as needed."

"The GP saw a patient with symptoms from enlarged saliva glands. The patient was already known to the local ENT team, but their symptoms had worsened. The GP wanted to know how to manage them in the short term and was able to speak to an ENT consultant for advice. This made the GP more confident with the management plan and reassured the patient that he had sought specialist advice."

"A patient's ultrasound scan had shown an incidental finding of a renal cyst. The GP used Telephone Advice & Guidance to rapidly contact a Consultant Urologist to discuss the best course of action. The consultant recommended that the GP organise a CT scan and that the patient's cyst was continuously monitored using further ultrasound scans."

"I saw a baby who was relatively well. He had a slight cold, but the mother was worried. The examination was largely uninformative apart from an oxygen saturation of 82%. I tried different oximeters, but the sats were still low. I decided to discuss my findings with a paediatrician, who immediately told me to send the child in! The child ended up in hospital for four days and was treated for the infection on site. The point is, apart from the low sats, the baby was as good as normal. Using Telephone Advice & Guidance that day was crucial."

## **About Consultant Connect**

Consultant Connect's Enhanced Advice & Guidance is the UK's most widely used Advice & Guidance service in the NHS. Clinicians can use email, phone, and messaging to contact specialists for patient-related advice. The Consultant Connect service already covers over 38 million NHS patients across the UK.

You can find out more here: [consultantconnect.org.uk/patient-experiences/](https://consultantconnect.org.uk/patient-experiences/)