

Breast care Patient Initiated Follow-Up (PIFU)

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net.

What is Patient-Initiated Follow-Up (PIFU)?

Patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU) puts you, the patient, in control of when you are seen by the breast department. It means spending less time attending hospital appointments, but still having access to clinical support when you need it.

If your condition is stable, you may not find it helpful to attend regular outpatient appointments scheduled by the hospital. Sometimes, these appointments may not result in any change to your treatment, but you'll have spent time and energy putting arrangements in place to attend your appointment. You may have a concern in between regular booked appointments and it's at this point that you really do need our input. With PIFU, you can get advice from your clinical team, who may suggest an appointment is required.

You initiate the follow-up appointment, instead of the hospital, which is why this process is called patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU).

For all other concerns, or if you are feeling unwell, your GP will remain your first point of contact.

How will I know if I'm suitable for PIFU?

The breast team will tell you if you are now suitable for PIFU, instead of regular appointments scheduled by the hospital.

When should I call for a PIFU?

You should call if you experience any new symptoms.

Changes to look and feel for:

- New changes to your breast, chest wall region, neck or under your arm.
- A change in size or shape to your breast.
- A new lump or thickening that feels different from the rest of the breast tissue.
- A change in skin texture such as puckering or dimpling (resembling orange peel).
- Redness or a rash on the skin and/or around the nipple (which may look like eczema).
- Your nipple becoming inverted (pulled in) or changing its position or shape.
- Discharge (liquid) from one or both of your nipples.
- A swelling in your armpit or around your collarbone.
- Constant pain in your breast or armpit.
- Possible side effects from your hormonal therapy or related potential menopausal symptoms.
- Possible side effects from your chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy treatment.
- A new and recent swelling in the arm or hand, which could represent lymphoedema.
- Problems or questions related to your original breast surgery or about future breast reconstruction or adjustments to the same breast or other breast.
- Any concerns or uncertainty about continuing any of your medication.
- Any concerns about body image, shape and symmetry.
- Any questions about family history.

Being breast aware:

Please continue being breast and body aware. The following may be of help to you:

- Looking at and feeling your breasts regularly – at the same time each month.
- Try to use a mirror to check for changes, with your arms down by your side then raise them above your head.
- Use the flat of your hand to feel for any changes in the breast or chest wall. This is better when carried out lying down with the other arm above your head.
- Do not examine yourself by pinching your breast between your fingers.

How will I book a patient-initiated appointment?

This is a quick and easy process.

If you have a concern and need advice or an appointment, just follow the steps below and the team will help you.

5 easy steps:

1. Call the breast team on **01271 349115** (Monday – Friday, 8am – 4pm)

If there is no reply, please leave a message on the answerphone with the following information:

- Your full name and date of birth
 - Your hospital number and/or NHS number
 - A telephone number so we can call you back during our opening hours
2. Explain to the breast team you have new symptoms and need some clinical advice.
 3. We will phone you back within 2 working days to let you know if you need a face-to-face appointment or if we can give you advice over the telephone.
 4. We will endeavour to arrange the face-to-face appointment for you within 14 working days.
 5. Attend your clinic appointment.

Will you still be looking after me if I'm on PIFU and don't initiate an appointment?

Yes, you will continue to have yearly imaging if appropriate and have access to the breast team.

If you have any concerns associated with your condition, but not new symptoms, you can contact the breast clinical nurse specialists (breast care nurses) for advice on 01271 349115, Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4pm. (non-urgent calls only). Unfortunately, they cannot accept 'drop-in' appointments.

If you have any concerns outside of these hours, please contact your GP or GP out-of-hours service.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website www.careopinion.org.uk.

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple
Devon EX31 4JB
Tel. 01271 322577
www.royaldevon.nhs.uk

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