

Patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU) – Frequently asked questions

What is PIFU?

Patient initiated follow-up (PIFU) puts you in control of making an appointment, or getting advice, when you need it. Some patients with stable long-term conditions, or conditions which flare up from time to time, do not require frequent checks at the hospital; others can be seen less often if they can easily get in touch when their condition changes. Research has shown that frequent visits do not necessarily help to prevent your condition returning or identify new problems.

With PIFU, instead of being offered regular clinic visits and routine check-ups with your consultant, you can make your own appointment only when you need it– reducing the unnecessary anxiety, travel and time spent on a routine check-up.

Why are we introducing PIFU?

We are starting this type of care because:

- It puts you in control of your own appointments. Appointments can be made based on your individual needs instead of being at routine intervals. If you experience a flare-up in symptoms or trouble with medication or drops, you will still be able to receive advice when you need it.
- It saves you time and money attending appointments that are not essential. The number of people making these journeys will be reduced and we hope this will improve patients' experience.
- Freeing up appointments means we can reduce the waiting times for people who need an appointment, especially people who need to be seen quickly or whose sight is at risk if their appointments are delayed.
- It will help us to cut down our carbon footprint by reducing the number of unnecessary journeys made to hospital.

How does it work?

You will be advised by your eye care team if your condition is now suitable to have your follow-ups as patient-initiated instead of, or alongside, the regular appointments scheduled by the hospital. Your eye care professional will discuss the process with you and provide you with this leaflet. Managing your appointments in this way is optional and it is your decision.

How do I book a PIFU appointment?

The service is quick and easy to use. If you experience a flare-up or a problem or would like to book a follow-up appointment, simply follow the link (from your introductory text or email) and indicate that you would like to initiate a follow up appointment. If you can't find this text, you can access the DrDoctor patient portal. You can also ring the number on your last patient letter for help.

Please remember that, if an appointment is booked, it is important that you attend it. If you find you are unable to do so, please tell us in advance, so we can give your appointment to someone else who needs it.

When should I call for a PIFU?

You should call your eye care team if you are experiencing a flare-up of your condition or have a problem with your condition or medication, and need to be seen or need advice from the eye team. The text we sent you and/or your most recent eye clinic letter will highlight symptoms to look out for to help you decide when you need to contact us.

When not to use PIFU

If you require very urgent medical advice you should contact your GP or NHS 111, or if you are really unwell, [attend or video call our A&E](#). For all other concerns, or if you are feeling unwell, your GP remains your first point of contact.

Will you still be looking after me if I do not call to set up an appointment?

This depends on whether another booked appointment has been made. If so, if you do not call back, you will be seen at the next scheduled appointment.

If you do not have a scheduled appointment, and you have not called us back within the time frame agreed with you by our clinical team, you will be discharged back to your GP and optometrist (optician). If you feel that you need further investigations, your GP will need to complete a new referral.

What if I am worried and change my mind about PIFU?

Some patients worry about losing contact with the hospital when they no longer need to be seen regularly by their eye care team. If you wish to go back to regular hospital appointments, tell us and we will arrange this for you.

We appreciate and encourage feedback. Please note we may be in touch in the future to ask about your experience.

Frequently asked questions

What if I cannot get through to make an appointment?

If you cannot get through to your eye care team, please email us at moorfields.outpatientbookingsbc@nhs.net

Why have you set a limit on the time for me to make an appointment?

Depending on your condition and the judgement of your clinical team, we may safely discharge you to the care of your GP or optician after an extended period of stability. They can quickly and easily refer you back to us again, and our nurse-led helpline on 020 7566 2345 can always offer you advice on eye conditions.