



# A guide to...

## Teledermatology Service

### *Patient information*

#### How to contact us

Dermatology Department  
Watford General Hospital  
West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust  
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If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 187** or email **[westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net)**



Department	Dermatology Department
Ratified / Review Date	January 2023 / January 2026
ID Number	23-2078-V2



# **Teledermatology Service**

## **Information for Patients**

This leaflet answers common questions about the Teledermatology service. If you would like further information, or have any particular worries, please do not hesitate to speak to your nurse or doctor.

## **What is Teledermatology?**

Teledermatology is the use of a special high-quality camera to take photographs of your skin problem. Your photographs will be reviewed by a consultant dermatologist (a doctor specialising in the study and treatment of skin conditions) and advice about how to treat your skin condition will be sent to your GP. Alternatively, if the specialist recommends you are seen face-to-face in a clinic that advice will be given to your GP who will then make a referral to a clinic in the usual way.

## **Who can be referred?**

Patients living within the area served by Herts Valley CCG who have been seen by their GP following concerns about a skin problem, and who are considered suitable for the service, can be referred to the Teledermatology service.

## **What are the benefits of this service?**

- You may come to find out the cause of your skin concern sooner than a hospital appointment
- Your GP will be given advice about treatment, so you can receive treatment sooner and closer to home
- Alternatively, if the specialist recommends a face-to-face clinic consultation, then the GP will make a referral

## **What happens at my GP appointment?**

Your GP will explain what they are going to do, which includes obtaining your consent and taking the relevant photographs of your skin. These photographs will be transferred electronically to a consultant dermatologist at West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust, along with the referral letter from your GP and your consent form. This is done through a secure IT network.

## **What happens after my GP appointment?**

The specialist will carefully review your photographs and referral details. They will be able to decide on the best course of action, in a similar way as if you had been seen in the hospital clinic.

For many patients, the doctor will be able to diagnose your problem and send your GP a plan for looking after your condition.

Sometimes, the consultant may decide that you do need to be seen in person or that you need a biopsy (a small piece of skin is taken and sent to a laboratory for diagnosis). If this is the case, the GP will make a referral in the clinic in the usual way. If you need to be seen quickly, the doctor will arrange for this to take place and you will be contacted with further information.

## Who provides the service?

This service is delivered by the West Herts Hospitals dermatology department which has been providing dermatology services to patients of South and West Hertfordshire Integrated Care Board for many years.

### **Q. Does the consultant dermatologist have to see my skin problem in person in order to identify what is wrong?**

**A.** No. The photographs are usually of a good enough quality to make a diagnosis. However, if the consultant has any uncertainty about the diagnosis, they will ask to see you in a face-to-face consultation.

### **Q. Do I need to do anything after my appointment?**

**A.** Your GP will inform you what you need to do after the Teledermatology report has been received.

Possible outcomes include:

- a) Often patients do not need to be seen in hospital, and can be managed by their GP. The specialist's report will provide a suitable management plan for you.
- b) It could be that there is no further action needed and in which case you only need to go back and see your GP if you are worried about your skin problem.
- c) If you need to be seen face-to-face by a specialist, your GP will make a referral for a clinic appointment in the usual way.

### **Q. Is this a safe service?**

**A.** Yes, this service is safe. It is already provided in many areas of the country and is an excellent way of helping patients be seen more quickly than at present without losing any quality in the care received.

## Useful contacts

Contact the dermatology team by:

Telephone: **01923 436 036**

For more information about the West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust Dermatology Service please visit our website: [www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk)

If you have any feedback on this leaflet please contact:.....

## Acknowledgement

The Trust would like to acknowledge Royal Free Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust for allowing us to reproduce part of their leaflet on "**Teledermatology Service**".