

Onward referral for treatment of detached retina



What is retinal detachment?

Retinal detachment is a condition which causes sight loss. Patients usually present with partial or total loss of sight, and urgent surgical treatment via a specialist retinal surgeon is required to save or recover the sight. The timing of the treatment could be essential for a better outcome.

Why am I being referred?

While we at the Royal Cornwall Hospital aim to treat all our patients locally, and this is certainly the case for patients requiring elective retinal or other eye operations, our limited emergency capacity does not allow us to treat all the patients who present with retinal detachment requiring emergency or urgent operations.

This limited capacity to treat retinal detachment on an emergency basis is common nationally and not unique to the Royal Cornwall Hospital. Hence, various hospitals in the South West Region including Plymouth, Exeter, Torbay, the Royal Cornwall Hospital and Taunton have collaborated their resources to provide a rota for on call cover for the treatment of emergency retinal detachment over the weekend. At the Royal Cornwall Hospital, we also have collaborated with Bristol Eye Hospital to send patients requiring emergency retinal detachment in the weekdays to Bristol when this cannot be done locally because of limited theatre capacity or staff and specialist availability. Bristol Eye Hospital is a tertiary referral centre and has the most daily theatre capacity and specialist's availability in the region and provides cover to a wide geographic area. However, patients could be referred to Derriford Hospital or other hospitals in the region or nationally on their request subject to acceptance of the referral by the receiving unit.

We appreciate the considerable inconvenience and anxiety that this may cause, but **it is imperative that you are treated in the shortest possible timescale for a better outcome.**

The referral aims only to deliver the emergency treatment promptly. Beyond this, we have the expertise and the capacity available locally to follow up the patient and to carry on further elective operations if they are needed. Obviously, there may be exemptions for various reasons.

How do I get there?

Patients travelling to healthcare appointments are normally expected to make their own way, using their own transport or the range of public, community or voluntary transport available. Some patients will be eligible for NHS funded transport on health grounds if they meet the medical or mobility criteria set out by the Department of Health.

Where a patient does not qualify for funded transport on health grounds, they may be able to get help with travel costs through the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme if they are in receipt of income-related benefits or have a low income. For more information about the scheme the national health costs advice line is available on 0845 850 1166 or 0300 330 1343.

For patients who need to travel outside of Cornwall for treatment, guidance can be sought from Patient Transport Services at the Royal Cornwall Hospital on 01872 252211. This service is available between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 6pm at weekends and Bank Holidays. This service can advise on eligibility for ambulance transport and signpost to alternative options where required.

Other useful contacts for travel outside of Cornwall are TAP Transport (01872 223388) and Volunteer Cornwall (01872 265300). If these services are unable to meet short-notice requests or their offices are closed, especially at weekends, Patient Transport Services may be able to contact them on your behalf. Please have a look at NHS kernow leaflet available in the Eye Unit for further information.

Where will I be seen following surgery?

You will usually be followed up by the referring consultant at Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trust, and an appointment will be sent to you providing you with an appointment two weeks post-procedure for your on-going management.

If you wish you can continue your management under Bristol or another hospital in the region. In some cases, the operating surgeon may wish to follow you up initially for his/her own reason, but it would be your choice to accept to continue with travelling, or return to the Royal Cornwall Hospital for your on-going management. You would need to arrange your own transport at all times.

What if I don't receive a follow-up appointment?

Please contact the Eye Unit who will make arrangements for an appointment to be sent to you. If this is specific to the management of retinal detachment, please contact Mr Murjaneh's co-ordinator directly on 01872 253905.

What should I do once I am referred?

- You need to know which hospital and what time to attend – this may be given to you while you are in the department or after you go back home. You will receive a phone call to confirm the arrangements. Please ensure you give an accessible phone number before leaving the department.
- You cannot drive yourself – as you may have an operation, and then you will not legally be allowed to drive for safety reasons.
- Be prepared for an overnight stay, either in the hospital or in a hotel for yourself and any accompanying person.
- You may be given 'nil by mouth' advice for 6 hours prior to arriving at the receiving hospital. This is to ensure you are fit for surgery which may require a general anaesthetic. However, the surgery may be performed either under local or general anaesthesia.
- Take with you all your medications/repeat prescriptions and your referral letter.
- The referring doctor may give you dilating eye drops to apply to your eye/eyes about an hour before arriving at the receiving hospital.
- If you would prefer to have the operation locally (even if it means a delayed treatment and worse outcome) please inform the referring doctor and we will make a different arrangement for you.
- The referring doctor aims to provide you with the best care and will refer you to get your operation urgently. However, on occasion, the receiving surgeon may decide that you do not need the operation urgently or you may not need the operation at all. In this case you be referred back to be seen locally.
- Check that you have received a follow up appointment locally.
- If you are planning to claim travel costs, please read below and ensure you enquire and provide your correct form as below.

Can I claim travel costs?

There are only limited occasions when travel costs can be claimed. If you are able to claim travel costs, **these must be claimed from the cashier at the hospital to which you are referred – not your local hospital.**

The following information is taken from the **NHS Choices** website - 'NHS in England - help with health costs.'

Help with travel costs

If you are referred to hospital or other NHS premises for NHS specialist treatment or diagnostic tests by your doctor, dentist or other health professional, you may be able to claim a refund of reasonable travel costs under the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS). The section below explains who is eligible for the scheme and how to make a claim.

If you have questions about help with health costs, join the Help with health costs team on Facebook where the NHS Business Services Authority will respond to your queries Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

Who can claim help with travel costs?

To qualify for help with travel costs under the HTCS, you must meet three conditions:

- **Condition one:** At the time of your appointment, you or your partner (including civil partners) must receive one of the qualifying benefits or allowances listed below, or meet the eligibility criteria of the NHS Low Income Scheme (see details at end of leaflet).
- **Condition two:** You must have a referral from a healthcare professional for a specialist or to a hospital for further NHS treatment or tests (often referred to as 'secondary care').
- **Condition three:** Your appointment must be on a separate visit to when the referral was made. This applies whether your treatment is provided at a different location (hospital or clinic) or on the same premises as where your GP or other health professional issued the referral.

Children and other dependents

You can claim travel costs for your children if you are eligible for any of the benefits described under condition one and your child has been referred for treatment as outlined in condition two and condition three. If your child is 16 or over, they may make their own claim under the Low Income Scheme.

Carers and escorts

You can claim travel costs for an escort, if your health professional says that it is medically necessary for someone to travel with you.

You may also be able to claim help with travel costs if you are the parent or guardian of a child under the age of 16 who you have to bring with you to your appointment.

These payments are made on the basis of the patient's eligibility for the scheme, irrespective of the escort's eligibility.

Who cannot claim help with travel costs?

You cannot claim help with travel costs if:

- you are visiting someone in hospital; however, if you are a visitor in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits listed below, you may be able to receive assistance from your local council;
- you are visiting your local GP, dentist or other primary care service provider for routine check-ups or other services, such as vaccinations or cervical cancer screening, as these are excluded from the scheme; urgent primary care services during out-of-hours periods (i.e. between 6.30pm and 8.00pm weekdays, at weekends or on bank holidays) are also excluded.

Qualifying benefits and allowances

You can claim help with travel costs if you or your partner (including civil partner) receive any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance

- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
- You are named on, or entitled to, an NHS tax credit exemption certificate. If you do not have a certificate, you can show your award notice. You qualify if you get child tax credits, working tax credits with a disability element (or both) and have income for tax credit purposes of £15,276 or less.
- You have a low income and are named on certificate HC2 (full help) or HC3 (limited help). To apply for this certificate, you should complete form HC1, which is available from your local hospital, Jobcentre Plus offices, or from the NHS print contract order line on 0300 123 0849.
- You receive Universal Credit and meet the criteria.

What form of transport can I use?

The NHS organisation handling your claim will base any refund on the basis of what would have been the cheapest suitable mode of transport for your circumstances, which can include your age, medical condition or any other relevant factors. This means you should use the cheapest, most appropriate means of transport, which in most cases will be public transport.

If you travelled by car and your claim was approved, you'll be reimbursed for the cost of fuel at the mileage rate used by your local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

You'll also be able to claim for unavoidable car parking and toll charges.

When using a taxi for transport, it is recommended that you agree this in advance with the hospital or CCG before you travel.

Help with travel costs before your appointment

In most cases, you are expected to pay for your travel and claim back the costs. The majority of payments are made on the day of your appointment by the cashier. However, if a cashier is not available, it is possible to claim in advance of travel or retrospectively, using the HC5 (T) claim travel charges form.

The HTCS also allows advance payments to help you attend your healthcare appointments – for example, if you do not have the money to get to your hospital appointment and you are on a low income or benefits. Advanced payments may also be issued if you are attending a hospital or NHS clinic that does not have a cashiers office. Please contact the hospital or relevant CCG to check.

Further information

Below is a list of telephone numbers that you may find helpful.

Royal Cornwall Hospital Trust 01872 253905

Cashiers' offices at:

Derriford Hospital 01752 439805

Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital 01392 402383

Torbay Hospital 01803 656555

Bristol Royal Infirmary 0117 342 2286

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

