Cancer waiting times definitions by country

Comparisons of cancer waiting times data cannot currently be made between countries in the UK due to different definitions and methods of measuring each wait, and separate Ministerial targets for each government. Further investigation would be needed to establish whether differences have significant impact on the comparability of the data.

Overview of cancer waiting times definitions by country

	TWO WEEK WAIT TARGET AND DEFINITION		31 DAY TARGET AND DEFINITION		62 DAY TARGET AND DEFINITION	
England	**93%**	To see a specialist after urgent referral for suspected cancer	**96%**	From receiving diagnosis to first definitive treatment	**85%**	Beginning first definitive treatment following urgent GP referral
Scotland	**x**	Doesn't report	**95%**	Receiving treatment following decision to treat	**95%**	Beginning treatment following urgent referral for suspicion of cancer
Wales	**x**	Doesn't report	**95%**	For starting treatment after diagnosis (non-urgent route)	**95%**	Starting treatment after suspected cancer (urgent route)
Northern Ireland	**100%**	To be seen following urgent referral for **breast cancer**	**98%**	Receiving first definitive treatment after diagnosis	**95%**	Starting treatment following urgent referral

Cancer waiting times definitions by country compiled by the Statistical Information Team at Cancer Research UK. Based on information from each country, July 2015.

England

Cancer waiting times data for England is recorded by NHS England. Data are for NHS patients only and are recorded by provider and commissioner.

Records from discontinued organisations/commissioning hubs count towards the national performance figures. We have excluded these in our own analysis so this may affect the national figure we display on our website compared to the figure NHS England produce.

Difference between provider-based and commissioner-based statistics

Commissioner-based statistics only includes those patients who can be traced back to an English commissioner using their NHS number. As a result, the national calculated performance levels may differ slightly between the two datasets. Commissioner data is derived from the data submitted by the providers of NHS cancer services, so the provider-based national statistics remain the most complete assessment of the performance of the English NHS.

Definitions

Two week wait (93% target) – Patients seen by a specialist within 14 days of an urgent GP referral for suspected cancer

- All suspected cancer, by suspected cancer, for exhibited breast cancer symptoms

31 day wait (96% target) **–** Patients receiving **first** definitive treatment within 31 days of a cancer diagnosis**.**

- Measured from point when patient is informed of diagnosis of cancer and agrees their package of care
- All cancers and by cancer
- Sub-pathways **for second or subsequent treatment** (note: have different targets) **-** anti-cancer drug regimen (98% target), surgery (94% target), radiotherapy (94% target).

62 day wait (85% target) – Patients beginning their first definitive treatment for cancer within 62 days following an urgent GP referral for suspected cancer.

- Sub-pathways (note: have different targets) - referral from NHS screening programme (90% target), referral following a decision by the consultant who is responsible for their care to upgrade a patient's priority with a suspicion of cancer (no target)

Wales

Cancer waiting times data for Wales is published by StatsWales. The data is for NHS patients only, and for patients newly diagnosed with cancer or diagnosed with a new primary cancer, not recurrence. The data is published by Health Board.

Definitions

31 day wait (95% target) – Patients starting definitive treatment who are not referred by urgent suspected cancer route within 31 days of diagnosis. Non-urgent route includes all other patients regardless of referral route not included in the urgent suspected cancer referral route.

62 day wait (95% target) – Patients starting definitive treatment who are referred via the urgent suspected cancer route within 62 days of receipt of referral at hospital. Referred from primary care to hospital as urgent with suspected cancer, then confirmed by urgent by consultant/designated member of MDT.

For both measures, the start of the cancer waiting time is the date which the decision to treat was confirmed between a designated member of the MDT and the patient.

"First definitive treatment" - is agreed with clinician responsible for patient's management plan and may not necessarily be the first planned treatment decided upon by the MDT.

Scotland

Cancer waiting times data for Scotland is published by the Information Services Division Scotland. The data is for NHS patients only, not private patients. The data is published by NHS Health Board and cancer network. The NHS board to which a patient is initially referred is responsible for meeting target.

Definitions

62 day wait (95% target) – Patients starting treatment within 62 days of receipt of urgent referral with suspicion of cancer. Applies to; any patients urgently referred with suspicion of cancer by their primary care clinician/dentist, any screened positive patients who are referred through a national cancer screening programme (breast, colorectal, cervical) and any direct referral to hospital (e.g. A&E).

31 day wait (95% target) – Patients starting first treatment within 31 days from decision to treat, regardless of route of referral.

Northern Ireland

Cancer waiting times data for Northern Ireland is published by the Northern Ireland Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety. The data is for NHS patients only, not private patients. The data is published by Health and Social Care Trust.

Definitions

14 day wait for breast cancer only (100% target) – Patients seen within 14 days of an urgent referral for breast cancer

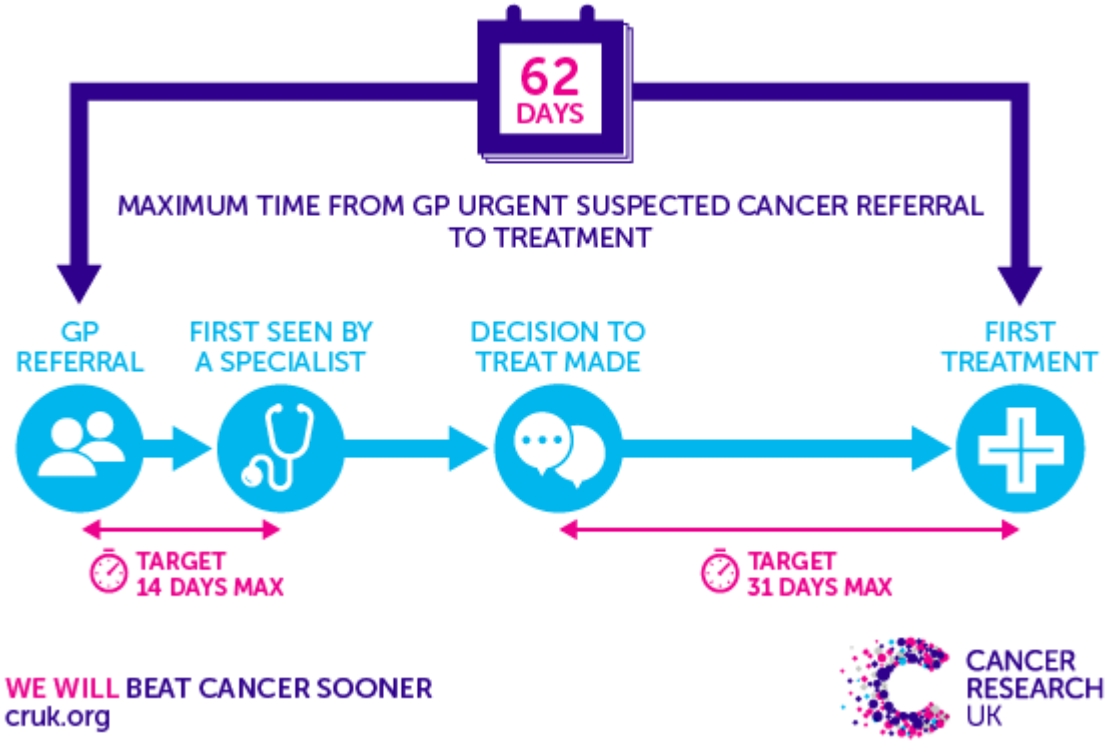
62 day wait (95% target) – Patients beginning their first treatment for cancer within 62 days following an urgent GP referral for suspected cancer.

- Date of referral is the date on which referral is received by HSCT from a GP.
- Date of first definitive treatment is normally the date on which the first intervention which is intended to remove or shrink tumour.
- All referrals and reclassified as urgent referrals by a specialist.
- This target only applies to referrals initially referred by GP. Referrals from other sources or non urgent referrals are excluded.

31 day wait (98% target) – Patients receiving first definitive treatment within 31 days of a cancer diagnosis and decision to treat.

- Decision to treat is the date on which it was decided that the patient should receive treatment for cancer. This is the date that the consultation between patient and clinician took place and a treatment plan was agreed.
- Date of first definitive treatment – date on which first intervention which is intended to remove/shrink tumour. Irrespective of source of referral.

Infographic of Cancer waiting times definitions



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Source: cruk.org.uk/cancerstats