

My referral and what it means

If you require treatment from an ophthalmologist (or other medical specialist) your general practitioner (GP) or optometrist will provide you with a referral.



Choice of specialist

When you are given a referral your GP or optometrist may suggest an ophthalmologist that is known to them through previous referrals for the condition affecting you. This doesn't mean you have to see the ophthalmologist suggested. You are free to do some research and ask to be referred to another ophthalmologist.

What does my referral cover?

A referral will cover a 'single course of treatment' for the referred condition. In simple terms this includes:



An initial appointment with the ophthalmologist



any subsequent appointments for the continuing management of that condition.

Referral periods from a GP or optometrist to a specialist

A referral from a GP or optometrist to a medical specialist lasts **12 months**, unless noted otherwise. The referral starts from the date the specialist first sees the patient, not the date the referral is issued.

If a patient needs continuing care, a GP or optometrist can write a referral beyond 12 months or for an indefinite period.

If a patient on an indefinite referral has a new or unrelated condition, the GP or optometrist must issue a new referral for that condition.



Referral periods from a specialist to another specialist

Referrals from one specialist to another specialist are valid for 3 months unless the patient is an admitted patient (to hospital).

For example, your ophthalmologist may need to refer you to another ophthalmologist who has further specialisation in the condition you require treatment for (e.g. Macular Degeneration or Glaucoma). This is common practice as some ophthalmologists undertake advanced study in different disease areas or conditions and become highly specialised at treating these.

Referrals for admitted patients are valid for 3 months or the duration of admission, whichever is longer.

Source: Australian Government Department of Human Services