

Specialist Clinic Referral Guidelines

OPHTHALMOLOGY SURGERY

If there is a concern about the delay of the appointment, or any deterioration in the patient's condition, please send an updated referral with additional information.

If the patient's care needs have become urgent, please call the unit registrar on call on 9076 2000.

To refer your patient to Specialist Outpatient ophthalmology clinics

Please send your referral to Alfred Specialist Clinics via **ConsultMed eReferral**. To log in or create a free [Consultmed account click here.](#)

Alfred Health's preference is for all referrers to utilise eReferral; however, referrals can be sent via fax to (03) 9076 6938, or email to op.referrals@alfred.org.au whilst we transition our services to this secure platform.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

Please note a referral may be declined if it does not contain essential information required for triage, if the condition is not appropriate for referral to a public hospital, or is a condition not routinely seen at Alfred Health.

The clinical information provided in the referral will determine the triage category. The triage category will affect the timeframe in which the patient is offered an appointment. Waiting times to scheduled appointments vary across clinics and are impacted by factors including clinic demand, capacity and staffing. You can view waiting times to scheduled appointments for urgent and routine referrals [here](#).

Specialist Clinic Referral Guidelines

OPHTHALMOLOGY SURGERY

Referrals to Victorian public hospitals will not be accepted for:

- Review or treatment of neovascular (wet) age-related macular degeneration (AMD) where the patient has commenced treatment at another facility
- Early intermediate or geographic atrophy (dry) age-related macular degeneration
- Screening for diabetic retinopathy
- Review of mild or moderate diabetic retinopathy (including pregnancy)
- Diabetic macular oedema not affecting the macular centre
- Cataract which does not have significant impact on the person's activities of daily living, or if spectacle correction of vision has not been assessed and documented, or if patient is not prepared to have surgery.
- Requests for diagnosis or ongoing management of glaucoma suspect, ocular hypertension, or stable early / moderate glaucoma

The following conditions are not routinely seen at Alfred Health:

- Patients who are being treated for the same condition at another Victorian public hospital
- Patients under 18 years of age
- Dry eyes
- Blepharitis
- Asymptomatic pterygium
- Acute chalazion/stye

Please refer to the Department of Health [Statewide Referral Criteria for Specialist Clinics](#) for further information when referring to Ophthalmology specialist clinics in public hospitals

Specialist Clinic Referral Guidelines

OPHTHALMOLOGY SURGERY

Please include in your referral:

Demographic details: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Date of birth• Patient's contact details including mobile phone number• Referring GP details• If an interpreter is required• Medicare number	Clinical information: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reason for referral• Duration of symptoms• Relevant pathology and imaging reports• Past medical history• Current medications
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Some clinics offer private consultations in public rooms. If the patient chooses to be seen as a private patient, **please provide a referral to a named specialist** to comply with MBS billing requirements. There is no out-of-pocket cost to the patient. Please note the patient may be seen by another consultant in that clinic to expedite their care.

The times to assessment may vary depending on size and staffing of the hospital department.

If you are concerned about the delay of the outpatient appointment or if there is any deterioration in the patient's condition, or if you require an urgent specialist opinion, please contact the Ophthalmology Registrar on call on 9076 2000.

Contents

[Age-related macular degeneration](#)

[Assessment for cataract surgery](#)

[Diabetic eye disease](#)

[Diplopia](#)

[Acute, painful](#)

[Acute, painless](#)

[Eye infections/ inflammations:](#)

[Viral/bacterial conjunctivitis with
discharge](#)

[Acute dacryocystitis](#)

[Drug allergy](#)

[Vernal catarrh](#)

[Corneal conditions](#)

[Eyelid disorders/malposition](#)

[Glaucoma](#)

[Headache](#)

[Tension headache](#)

[Vascular](#)

[Raised intracranial pressure](#)

[Giant cell arteritis and other vascular
disease](#)

[Ocular pathology](#)

[Accommodative/asthenopic \(eye
strain\)](#)

[Intra Ocular Foreign Bodies](#)

[Loss of vision \(non-cataract\)](#)

[Orbital pain](#)

[Proptosis](#)

[Trauma](#)

[Adnexal \(lids\)](#)

[Orbit](#)

[Penetrating non-magnetic metal/non -
metal, velocity](#)

[Chemical](#)

[Blunt trauma](#)

[External foreign bodies](#)

[Subtarsal \(occult\)](#)

[Watery eye](#)

Age-related macular degeneration

Department of Health [Statewide Referral Guidelines](#) apply for this condition.

Criteria for referral to public hospital specialist clinic services:

- New onset of reduced central vision and/or distortion due to neovascular (wet) age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Information to be included in the referral:

Information that **must** be provided:

- Comprehensive eye and vision assessment (usually performed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist) with refraction and dilated retinal examination, for both eyes
- Onset, severity and duration symptoms.

Provide if available:

- Optical coherence tomography (OCT) results
- If the person identifies as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Additional comments:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in the referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

Referral to a public hospital is not appropriate for:

- Review or continuation of treatment of neovascular (wet) age-related macular degeneration (AMD)
- Patients who are already receiving treatment in the community
- Early intermediate or geographic atrophy (dry) age-related macular degeneration.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Assessment for cataract surgery

Department of Health [Statewide Referral Criteria](#) apply for this condition.

Criteria for referral to public hospital specialist clinic services:

- Patient requests surgery for documented cataract with either:
 - Significant disabling symptoms that affect the person's activities of daily living (e.g. light or glare sensitivity, ability to drive, recognise faces, work or self-care, increased risk of falls)
 - Visual acuity 6/12 or worse in the affected eye.

Information to be included in the referral:

Information that **must** be provided:

- Statement that the patient has indicated interest in having surgical treatment.
- Comprehensive eye and vision assessment (usually performed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist) with refraction and dilated retinal examination that includes best corrected visual acuity (i.e. measured with spectacles or contact lenses) for both eyes and performed in the last 3 months
- Onset, severity and duration symptoms
- Functional impact of symptoms on daily activities including impact on work, study or carer role.

Provide if available:

- A scan result
- If unable to visualise the retina during the eye and vision assessment
- If the person is a commercial driver
- If the person is a carer
- If the person identifies as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Referral to a public hospital is not appropriate for:

- If the patient is not willing to have surgical treatment
- Lens opacities that do not have a significant impact on the person's activities of daily living
- Patients whose vision can be corrected with spectacles, contact lenses, or the use of visual aids.
- The patient is already on a waiting list at another public facility

Assessment for cataract surgery, continued

Additional comments:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in the referral.

The referral should note that the request is for advice on, or review of, the current management plan as requests for a second opinion will usually not be accepted.

If the person's vision deteriorates please provide an updated eye and vision assessment, with refraction, that includes best corrected visual acuity (i.e. measured with spectacles or contact lenses for both eyes)

Note as detailed in the Elective Surgery Access Policy, patients can only be referred for elective surgery at a public hospital if they meet the clinical threshold for that surgery at the time of referral for surgery.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Diabetic eye disease

Department of Health [Statewide Referral Criteria](#) apply for this condition.

Direct to the Emergency Department for:

- Sudden loss of vision.

Criteria for referral to public hospital specialist clinic services:

- Proliferative diabetic retinopathy (PDR)
- Assessment of severe non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy threatening vision
- Vitreous haemorrhage in a person with diabetes.
- Diabetic macula oedema affecting vision.

Information to be included in the referral.

Information that **must** be provided:

- Comprehensive eye and vision assessment usually performed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist, with refraction and dilated retinal examination, for both eyes performed in the last 3 months.

Provide if available:

- Onset, severity and duration of symptoms
- Type of diabetes and duration of disease
- Any previous eye treatments e.g. retinal laser, surgery, intravitreal injections
- Optical coherence tomography (OCT) results
- Recent HbA1c results
- Fasting lipid results
- Blood pressure readings
- If the patient is pregnant
- If the person identifies as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Additional comments:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in the referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

Referral to a public hospital is not appropriate for:

- Eye screening in patients with diabetes
- Review of non-vision threatening diabetic retinopathy (including during pregnancy).

[Return to Contents.](#)

Diplopia

Acute, painless diplopia

Immediately contact the ophthalmology registrar to arrange urgent ophthalmology assessment for this condition.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Acute, painful diplopia

Direct to the Emergency Department for this condition.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Eye infections/ inflammations

Viral/bacterial conjunctivitis with discharge

Direct to the Emergency Department for:

- Red eye with reduced vision
- Suspected iritis
- Suspected corneal ulcer
- Suspected herpes simplex , infections, or
- Herpes zoster ophthalmicus with eye involvement.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Reduced vision
- Discharge (purulent or watery)
- Photophobia (with or without pain)
- Itch/irritation
- Unilateral/bilateral
- Fluorescein staining (yes/no)
- Duration/frequency
- Current topical therapy
- Contact lens wearer (hard/soft)
- Ocular pain

Management:

- Appropriate broad-spectrum topical antibiotic (e.g. Chloramphenicol)
 - If unresponsive after four days, re-evaluate and refer if appropriate.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Acute dacryocystitis

Direct to the Emergency Department for this condition.

Management:

- One full course of broad-spectrum systemic antibiotic (e.g. Augmentin, Flucloxacillin) and refer.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Drug allergy

Immediately contact the ophthalmology registrar to arrange urgent ophthalmology assessment:

- If unresponsive and severe.

Management:

- Cessation of drug, conservative treatment, e.g. lubricants, topical decongestants, mast cell stabilisers and removal of allergies.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Vernal Catarrh

Immediately contact the ophthalmology registrar to arrange urgent ophthalmology assessment:

- If corneal ulceration is present.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Vernal catarrh is severe conjunctivitis, often in younger age group, characterised by severe itch, stringy mucoid discharge and typical thickened swollen “leathery” inferior fornix +/- cobblestone papillae, upper lid
 - NOTE: the discharge is quite characteristic for this condition.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Corneal conditions

Department of Health [Statewide Referral Criteria](#) apply for this condition.

Immediately contact the ophthalmology registrar to arrange urgent ophthalmology assessment for:

- Sudden loss of vision
- Corneal graft rejection
- Contact lens keratitis or corneal ulcers
- Embedded foreign body in the eye
- Traumatic eye injuries.

Criteria for referral to public hospital specialist clinic services:

- Corneal and ocular surface conditions including:
 - Progressive corneal conditions causing vision loss
 - Corneal melting disorders
 - Graft versus host disease
 - New pigmented corneal or conjunctival lesions
 - Ocular surface squamous neoplasia
 - Patient requires corneal transplant
 - Progressive cicatrising conjunctivitis
 - Progressive keratoconus
 - Symptomatic pterygium
 - Symptomatic, recurrent corneal erosion syndrome.

Information to be included in the referral.

Information that **must** be provided:

- Comprehensive eye and vision assessment (usually performed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist) with refraction
- Onset, severity and duration symptoms.

Corneal conditions (continued)

Provide if available:

- Any history of:
 - Herpetic eye disease
 - Corneal transplant
 - Contact lens use
 - Traumatic eye injury
 - Eye surgery
- If the person identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Additional comments:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in the referral.

People experiencing disadvantage or other barriers to accessing eyecare services may be eligible to receive services through the [Victorian Eyecare Service](#).

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

Referral to a public hospital is not appropriate for:

- Dry eyes
- Blepharitis
- Asymptomatic pterygium.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Eyelid disorders/malposition

Direct to the Emergency Department for:

- Preseptal or orbital cellulitis.

Immediately contact the ophthalmology registrar to arrange urgent ophthalmology assessment for:

- Entropion, according to clinical indication.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Discharge (purulent or watery)
- Photophobia (with or without pain)
- Itch/irritation
- Unilateral/bilateral
- Duration/frequency
- Current topical therapy
- Contact lens wearer (hard/soft)
- Acutely inflamed eyelid
- Lid swelling and chemosis

Management:

- For blepharitis without co-morbidity: lid scrub regime with/without AB
- For trichiasis: epilation – manual or otherwise
 - Routine referral appropriate if unresponsive/recurrent
- For ectropion: routine referral appropriate if symptoms severe
- For entropion: check for corneal damage with fluorescein; routine referral may be appropriate according to clinical indication
- For acute chalazion/stye: systemic AB (e.g. Augmentin) +/- cyst drainage.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

Referral to a public hospital is **not** appropriate for:

- Blepharitis.
- Upper lid dermatochalasis that is a purely cosmetic issue
- Acute chalazion/stye

[Return to Contents.](#)

Glaucoma

Department of Health [Statewide Referral Criteria](#) apply for this condition.

Immediately contact the ophthalmology registrar to arrange urgent ophthalmology assessment for:

- Sudden loss of vision associated with raised intraocular pressure (e.g. acute angle-closure glaucoma).

Criteria for referral to public hospital specialist clinic services:

- The management of:
 - Advanced glaucoma where the patients are not being appropriately managed in the community
 - Unstable, progressive glaucoma where the patients are not being appropriately managed in the community.
 - Glaucoma requiring surgery

Information to be included in the referral.

Information that **must** be provided:

- Comprehensive eye and vision assessment performed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist, with refraction, that includes **intraocular pressure** and visual field test for both eyes performed in the last 3 months
- Presence of any of the following:
 - Secondary glaucoma
 - If the patient has only one seeing eye
 - Multiple ocular surgeries
 - Ocular trauma.

Provide if available:

- Central corneal thickness measurement for both eyes performed in the last 3 months
- Optical coherence tomography (OCT) including retinal nerve fibre layer results
- Optic disc photos
- Gonioscopy test results.
- If the person identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Glaucoma, continued

Additional comments:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in the referral.

The referral should note that the request is for advice on, or review of, the current management plan as requests for a second opinion will usually not be accepted.

People experiencing disadvantage or other barriers to accessing eyecare services may be eligible to receive through the [Victorian Eyecare Service](#).

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

Referral to a public hospital is not appropriate for:

- Requests for the diagnosis or ongoing management of glaucoma suspect, ocular hypertension or stable early and moderate glaucoma where patients are being appropriately managed in the community

[Return to Contents.](#)

Headache

Tension headache

Evaluation

Key Points:

- No neurological signs/symptoms
- Normal visual acuity (VA)

Management:

- No need for ophthalmic assessment.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Vascular headache

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Migrainous cluster with visual symptoms.

Management:

- No need for referral unless suspect associated ocular pathology.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Raised intracranial pressure

Direct to the Emergency Department for this condition.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- +/- neurological signs/symptoms

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Giant cell arteritis and other vascular disease

Direct to the Emergency Department for:

- If patient is experiencing associated loss of vision.

Immediately contact the ophthalmology registrar to arrange urgent ophthalmology assessment:

- If pathology is suspected with confirmatory signs/symptoms and raised ESR.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Immediate ESR.

Management:

- Immediate discussion with Ophthalmologist for acute sight threatening giant cell arteritis is mandatory.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Headache with ocular pathology

Direct to the Emergency Department for:

- If patient experiences associated loss of vision or progressive loss of function (diplopia).

Immediately contact the ophthalmology registrar to arrange urgent ophthalmology assessment:

- Patient with no loss of vision or no progressive loss of function.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Headaches associated with ocular signs and symptoms (red eye, epiphora, proptosis, etc.)

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Accommodative/asthenopic headache

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Confirm absence of neurological vascular, tension headaches, etc.

Management:

- Not routinely seen at the Alfred
 - For asthenopic symptoms, suggest referral to optometrist for assessment.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Ocular foreign bodies

Direct to the Emergency Department for:

- Suspicious nature of injury
- Difficult to remove foreign body
- Visual loss
- Suspected penetration.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Site of entry
- X-ray
- History
- Visual acuity
- Attendant ocular signs

Management:

- Remove foreign body if superficial and easy to remove
- Cover eye (systemic AB only after consultation).

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Loss of vision (non-cataract)

Direct to the Emergency Department for:

- Arterial occlusions
- Retinal detachments
- Optic neuritis
- Optic nerve swelling or pathology – unilateral and bilateral .

Immediately contact the ophthalmology registrar to arrange urgent ophthalmology assessment:

- Floaters/flashes.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Severe loss of vision:
 - Speed of onset
 - Pain
 - Systemic disease
- Afferent pupil defect
- Unilateral or bilateral
- Fundus examination (often normal)
 - NOTE: dilate pupils to allow fundal examination only after exclusion of afferent pupil defect
- Transient loss of vision:
 - TIAs – fundus exam, bruit
 - NOTE: dilate pupils only after exclusion of afferent pupil defect.

Management:

- For arterial occlusions: suspected giant cell arteritis

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Orbital pain

Proptosis

Direct to the Emergency Department for:

- Acute proptosis.

Immediately contact the ophthalmology registrar to arrange urgent ophthalmology assessment:

- Not acute, depending on time frame and severity.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Acute, chronic, endocrine
- Painful
- Masses
- Ocular movement.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Trauma

Adnexal lids

Direct to the Emergency Department for:

- All full thickness lacerations of the upper lid
- Suspected canalicular disruption
- Levator disruption.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Functional anatomical integrity.

Management:

- Antibiotic ointment, pad.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Orbital trauma

Direct to the Emergency Department for this condition.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Diplopia +/- x-ray

Management:

- Antibiotics as appropriate.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Penetrating non-magnetic metal/non-metal trauma

Direct to the Emergency Department for this condition.

Management:

- No nose blowing.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Chemical trauma

Direct to the Emergency Department for this condition.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- History (acid, alkali, other)
- Phototoxic burns/UV burns

Management:

- Prolonged washout immediately with tap water and with local anaesthetic if readily available
- Must be excluded in all ocular traumas
- Contact poisons centre.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Blunt trauma

Direct to the Emergency Department for this condition.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Hyphema
- Traumatic mydriasis
- Loss of vision.

Management:

- Topical anaesthesia
- Copious irrigation, maintain for 15 minutes.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

External foreign bodies

Direct to the Emergency Department for:

- Suspicious nature of injury
- Difficult to remove foreign body
- Visual loss
- Suspected penetration.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Foreign bodies on ocular surface.

Management:

- Remove foreign body if superficial and easy to remove
- Cover eye and topical AB.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Subtarsal occult trauma

Direct to the Emergency Department for:

- If difficult/incomplete.

Management:

- Remove under LA
- Adjunctive fluorescein staining may help localisation.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)

Watery eye

Direct to the Emergency Department for:

- Only if there is severe pain or visual loss.

Evaluation

Key Points:

- Acquired adult.

Management:

- Photophobia/redness
- Hazy and enlarged cornea
- Frank suppuration
- Excessive lacrimation
- Inadequate drainage – lid/punctal position, history of trauma, nasal pathology
- If non-acute, routine referral is appropriate.

Additional information:

Please include the essential [demographic details and clinical information](#) in your referral.

Where appropriate and available, the referral may be directed to an alternative specialist clinic or service.

[Return to Contents.](#)