
What is the emergency department (ED) for?

The Western Eye Hospital's ED is on the ground floor and provides emergency treatment for urgent or sight-threatening conditions only.

If you sustain an eye injury and it's not sight-threatening, your first port of call should be your local:

- GP
- optician
- walk-in service, or
- minor injuries department

If, however, your condition is not resolved or worsens and it is an emergency, you should go to the ED.

The Western Eye Hospital is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, including bank holidays. Between 08.30 and 20.30, Monday to Friday, we have a team of between four and six practitioners working in the ED with access to specialist equipment.

Between 20.30 and 08.30 the department is manned by one doctor who deals with sight-threatening conditions and urgent referrals from other hospitals only.

Waiting time

We are part of an acute trauma NHS Trust so, sometimes, we have to deal immediately with patients with sight-threatening emergencies. This may cause delays within the department but we will keep you updated as best we can. Please bear with us.

Waiting times vary but you can wait up to four hours to see a doctor due to the complexity of emergencies. Please remember to tell one of the nursing staff or receptionists if you decide to leave the ED.

Patient pathway

1. Registration

The receptionist will ask for your personal details, including your GP's details and next of kin (emergency contact).

They will then ask you to wait in the waiting room before being triaged.

- If your emergency has been caused by blunt trauma, chemical injury or sudden loss of vision, please tell the receptionist when you register.
- If you are from overseas (non-EU) or would like to be seen privately, please tell the receptionist.

2. Triage

A specialist nurse will assess you to work out how urgently you need to receive treatment.

Next you will either be directed to see the assessment nurse or asked to wait in the waiting area. This will depend on the number of patients in the department needing urgent assessment and treatment.

3. Assessment nurse

Following your triage, investigations and procedures might be needed. These might include:

- checking your vision (distance vision)
- checking your eye pressure
- drops (to either enlarge your pupils or help with pain)
- eye scans
- minor urgent surgical procedures

If we need to examine the back of your eye (fundus) we need to instil drops to enlarge the pupil which can last up to six hours. Therefore, we advise you not to drive during this time.

4. Eye examination

An advanced clinical practitioner or a doctor will exam your eye(s) and you may have additional investigations and treatments.

5. What happens after my assessment?

There are three potential outcomes:

- we provide medical treatment and advice before discharging you
- we refer you to an outpatient ophthalmology department directly in less than two weeks or via the GP if it's a routine referral to your local hospital provider
- we refer you to another hospital directly if urgent or via your GP if routine

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any suggestions or comments about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (PALS) on 020 3312 7777. You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net

The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net
Telephone: 020 3312 1337 / 1349

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

Western Eye Hospital

Your visit to the emergency department

Information for patients, relatives and carers