

## STATEWIDE REFERRAL CRITERIA FOR SPECIALIST CLINICS COMMUNICATIONS PACK: March – May 2024

# Joint pain and plastics surgery

### COMMS – PATHWAYS READY

Please check that your HealthPathways are ready before publishing. If they are not, the social message 1 is purely about the release on 1 March which can be used.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

From the **1 March 2024** referrals to specialist clinics for plastic surgery and joint pain, including lower back pain, will be assessed against new statewide referral criteria in all Victorian public hospitals.

The aim of statewide referral criteria is to reduce overall wait times for patients through safe, streamlined access to specialist clinic in public hospitals in Victoria. The statewide referral criteria provide referring clinicians clear and consistent guidance about which patients can be seen in public specialist clinics across Victoria and what investigations are necessary to support accurate prioritisation of referrals. Statewide referral criteria only apply to adult specialist clinics.

The Victorian Department of Health has developed and published new statewide referral criteria for 14 conditions, within the 2 specialties. These form part of the existing suite of 13 specialties.

**Joint pain** and lower back pain (hip and knee conditions, shoulder conditions, progressive low back pain)

- [Osteoarthritis of the hip](#)
- [Osteoarthritis of the knee](#)
- [Osteoarthritis of the shoulder](#)
- [Other hip conditions](#)
- [Other knee conditions](#)
- [Other non-traumatic shoulder conditions](#)
- [Progressive lower back pain](#)
- [Shoulder trauma](#)

#### Plastic Surgery

- [Carpal tunnel and other nerve compression syndromes](#)
- [Dupuytren's contracture](#)
- [Hand fractures and infections](#)
- [Melanoma](#)
- [Skin lesions and other skin cancers](#)

This project is supported by the Victorian Government

- Stenosing tenosynovitis including trigger finger

These and other statewide referral criteria can be found at: [src.health.vic.gov.au/specialities](https://src.health.vic.gov.au/specialities) or GPs and other primary care providers can use [HealthPathways or care pathways website](#). This will be the quickest way to understand their local public hospital's requirements when making referrals and support the safe management of patients in primary care when referral to a public specialist clinic has been declined or is not yet indicated.

## The benefit of HealthPathways

HealthPathways offers specific clinical advice, including alternate conservative management options and referral pathways, such as suitable allied health referral options.

Referrals that do not meet the criteria will be declined and returned to the referrer. Referrers should receive a letter clearly stating why the referral has been declined from the health service. Referrers can seek guidance from HealthPathways to:

- Review referral criteria
- support the safe management of patients in primary care when referral to a public specialist clinic has been declined or is not yet indicated.

PHNs have been funded to support the adoption of the statewide referral criteria into primary health through inclusion of the statewide criteria within HealthPathways and online care pathways sites. Statewide referral criteria are available across all Victorian HealthPathways websites (or equivalent online care platform for SEMPHN and Gippsland PHN), alongside related clinical and referral pathways. Alternatively, the statewide referral criteria can be viewed on the official DH website at <https://src.health.vic.gov.au>.

## KEY MESSAGES

### What is the main information for GPs?

- New statewide referral criteria for joint pain and plastic surgery come into effect from 1 March 2024.
- These criteria provide clear and concise guidance on when a referral for specialist opinion and management is indicated for a limited number of commonly presenting conditions.
- When a referring GP uses the new criteria to refer a patient to a public hospital, patients can be placed directly onto the specialist clinics wait list.
- Statewide referral criteria apply to public hospitals and health services only. They do not apply to private hospitals.

- GPs and other primary care providers should check their local [HealthPathways or care pathways website](#) when considering a referral. If the referral is declined, GPs can find up to date clinical advice on how to effectively manage these conditions within the community.
- GPs can visit [src.health.vic.gov.au](http://src.health.vic.gov.au) to view the criteria.
- Additional statewide criteria will be released for new speciality areas throughout 2024. The next suite, breast surgery, is scheduled for release on 1 June 2024.

## NEWS ITEM FOR GP NEWSLETTERS

**Title: New criteria to reduce wait times for eligible patients requiring plastic surgery or with joint or lower back pain.**

New statewide referral criteria for [plastic surgery](#) and [joint pain](#) come into effect from 1 March 2024 in all Victorian public hospitals.

When a referring GP successfully uses the new criteria for [plastic surgery](#) or [joint pain](#) to refer a patient to a public hospital, patients can be placed directly onto the specialist clinics wait list. The referral information encourages multi-disciplinary assessments to support non-surgical care and, when required appropriate direction to surgical treatment through the statewide referral criteria. This is why more information is needed in referrals – to support better access for patients.

The Victorian Department of Health has developed and published statewide referral criteria for 14 conditions across the joint pain and plastic surgery speciality suites.

**Joint pain** (focussing on hip and knee conditions, shoulder conditions, progressive low back pain)

- [Osteoarthritis of the hip](#)
- [Osteoarthritis of the knee](#)
- [Osteoarthritis of the shoulder](#)
- [Other hip conditions](#)
- [Other knee conditions](#)
- [Other non-traumatic shoulder conditions](#)
- [Progressive lower back pain](#)
- [Shoulder trauma](#)

**Plastic Surgery** (focussing on hand and skin lesions)

- [Carpal tunnel and other nerve compression syndromes](#)
- [Dupuytren's contracture](#)
- [Hand fractures and infections](#)
- [Melanoma](#)
- [Skin lesions and other skin cancers](#)
- [Stenosing tenosynovitis including trigger finger](#)

These two new suites join the 13 suites of statewide referral criteria already in existence across Victoria.

GPs and other primary care providers can visit HealthPathways or care pathways or [src.health.vic.gov.au](http://src.health.vic.gov.au) to find these and the other statewide referral criteria.

Statewide referral criteria provide referring clinicians clear and consistent guidance about which patients can be seen in public specialist clinics across Victoria and what investigations are necessary to support accurate prioritisation of referrals.

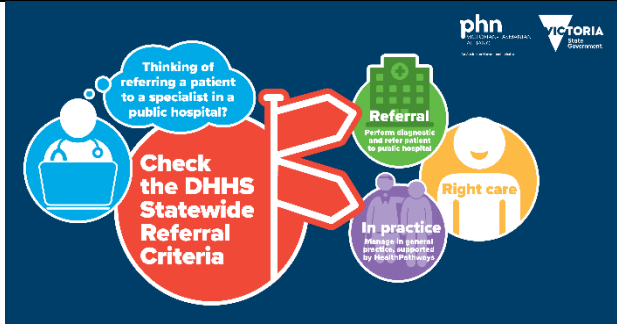

GPs and other primary care providers are encouraged to check their local [HealthPathways or care pathways website](#) when making referrals – this will be the quickest way to understand their local public hospital's requirements. It is also a helpful way to trouble shoot management of these conditions when a referral to specialist clinics is not indicated.


GPs can visit HealthPathways or care pathways website or visit [src.health.vic.gov.au](http://src.health.vic.gov.au) to view the criteria.

Statewide referral criteria apply to public hospitals and health services only. They do not apply to private hospitals. Breast Surgery is the next suite of criteria scheduled for release on 1 June 2024, additional specialities set to be released throughout 2024.

## SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES AND GRAPHICS

### Message 1:

	<p><b>New statewide referral criteria are now in effect for joint pain and plastic surgery in public hospitals.</b></p> <p>The Victorian Department of Health has developed and published statewide referral criteria for 14 conditions within the joint pain and plastic surgery suites. The aim of statewide referral criteria is to reduce overall wait times for patients through safe, streamlined access to specialist clinic in public hospitals in Victoria.</p> <p>Visit <a href="https://src.health.vic.gov.au/specialities">https://src.health.vic.gov.au/specialities</a> when considering a referral for a patient.</p> <p>Read more: [link to news item]</p> <p>#StatewideReferralCriteria #ClearConsistentCriteria</p>
	<p><b>New statewide referral criteria are now in effect within Victorian public hospitals for select joint pain conditions.</b></p> <p>Referrals for joint pain conditions of the hip and knee and shoulder, and progressive low back pain referrals, will be assessed against the new statewide referral criteria from 1 March 2024.</p> <p>Check your local [HealthPathways or care pathways website] or visit <a href="https://src.health.vic.gov.au/specialities">https://src.health.vic.gov.au/specialities</a> when considering a referral for a patient.</p> <p>Read more: [link to news item]</p>

	<p>#StatewideReferralCriteria #ClearConsistentCriteria</p>
 <p>The graphic features the text 'Clear Consistent Criteria' in white on a magenta background. To the right is a white line-art illustration of a hand with a surgical incision on the palm. At the bottom left are the logos for 'phn' and 'VICTORIA State Government'.</p>	<p><b>New statewide referral criteria are now in effect within Victorian public hospitals for select plastic surgery conditions</b></p> <p>Referrals for select plastic surgery conditions of the hand and skin, will be assessed against the new statewide referral criteria from 1 March 2024.</p> <p>Check your local [HealthPathways or care pathways website] when considering a plastic surgery referral for: melanoma, carpal tunnel syndrome, hand fractures and infections, skin lesions and other skin conditions, <u>Dupuytren’s contracture</u>, and <u>Stenosing tenosynovitis including trigger finger</u></p> <p>The statewide referral criteria provide referring clinicians clear and consistent guidance about which patients can be seen in public specialist clinics across Victoria and what investigations are necessary to support accurate prioritisation of referrals.</p> <p>Visit <a href="https://src.health.vic.gov.au/specialities">https://src.health.vic.gov.au/specialities</a></p> <p>Read more: [link to news item]</p> <p>#StatewideReferralCriteria #ClearConsistentCriteria</p>