

STATEWIDE REFERRAL CRITERIA FOR SPECIALIST CLINICS COMMUNICATIONS PACK: December 2025

Children's Surgery

Are your HealthPathways ready?

Please check that your region's HealthPathways or equivalent pathways are ready before publishing. If they are not, use social message 1 for the 1 December 2025 release.

Background information

From **1 December 2025**, referrals for **children's surgery conditions** will be assessed against new statewide referral criteria in all Victorian public hospitals.

The aim of statewide referral criteria is to streamline access to specialist clinics in public hospitals in Victoria, by reducing inappropriate referrals and overall wait times for patients. Statewide referral criteria assist referring clinicians to know when a referral to a public specialist clinic is appropriate and the information that should be included in the referral.

The Victorian Department of Health has developed and published new statewide referral criteria for nine children's surgery conditions.

Children's surgery conditions

- [Abdominal wall, groin and umbilical hernias in children](#)
- [Assessment of congenital hand anomalies in children](#)
- [Assessment of ear anomalies in children](#)
- [Assessment of subcutaneous lesions and lumps in children](#)
- [Assessment of tongue mobility in children](#)
- [Birthmarks – children's surgery](#)
- [Foreskin and penis conditions in children](#)
- [Testis conditions in children](#)
- [Trigger finger or thumb in children](#)

All statewide referral criteria can be found at:
health.vic.gov.au/statewide-referral-criteria/specialties

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

This project is supported by the Victorian Government

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The benefit of HealthPathways

HealthPathways offers specific clinical advice, including alternative 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 from the health service clearly stating why the referral has been declined.

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 statewide referral criteria by primary health care providers through their inclusion in HealthPathways, or equivalent online pathways. Statewide referral criteria are available across all Victorian HealthPathways websites (or equivalent online platform for South Eastern Melbourne PHN and Gippsland PHN), alongside related clinical and referral pathways. Alternatively, the statewide referral criteria can be viewed on the official Department of Health website at health.vic.gov.au/statewide-referral-criteria.

Key messages

What is the main information for GPs?

- New statewide referral criteria for a range of **children's surgery** referrals to **surgery services** come into effect from **1 December 2025**.
- 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.
- To ensure patients are able to be placed on a specialist clinic waitlist, referrals should include all information outlined in the new criteria.
- 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 not accepted, GPs can find up-to-date clinical advice on how to effectively manage these conditions within the community.
- GPs can visit health.vic.gov.au/statewide-referral-criteria to view the criteria.
- Additional statewide criteria will be released for new specialty areas throughout 2026.

News item for GP newsletters

Title: Statewide Referral Criteria - new suite of children's surgery conditions.

New statewide referral criteria for a range of children's surgery conditions come into effect from 1 December 2025 in all Victorian public hospitals.

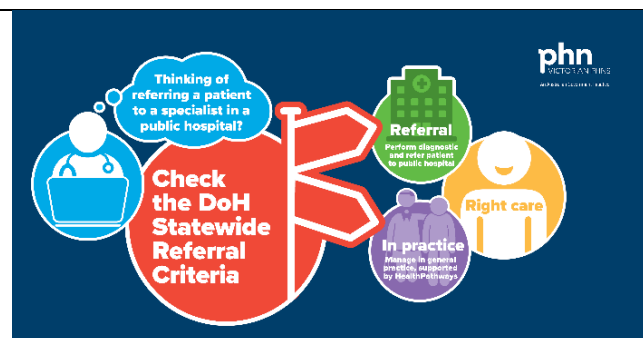
Patients can be placed on a specialist clinic wait list when a referring GP provides information that shows the referral meets the new children's surgery criteria.

The criteria identify the information that should be included in a referral to assess the referral and direct the patient to the best service available.

The Victorian Department of Health has developed and published statewide specialist referral criteria for a further eight children's surgery conditions. The children's surgery suite is among 19 suites of specialist referral criteria already in existence across Victoria.

Social media messages and graphics

Message 1:



New statewide referral criteria are now in effect for children's surgery conditions in public hospitals.

The Victorian Department of Health has developed and published statewide referral criteria for nine children's surgery conditions.

The aim of statewide referral criteria is to improve access to public hospitals in Victoria by providing clear and concise guidance on when a referral for specialist opinion and management is indicated.

Visit health.vic.gov.au/statewide-referral-criteria/specialties when considering a referral for a patient.

Read more: [link to news item]

#StatewideReferralCriteria

#ClearConsistentCriteria

	Alternative Care Pathways graphic for SEMPHN and GPHN.
Message 2: 	New statewide referral criteria are now in effect within Victorian public hospitals for selected surgery conditions for children. Referrals for specialist management of children's surgery conditions, will be assessed against the new statewide referral criteria from 1 December 2025. Check your local HealthPathways or online pathways website or visit health.vic.gov.au/statewide-referral-criteria when considering a referral for a patient. Read more: [link to news item] #StatewideReferralCriteria #ClearConsistentCriteria