

STATEWIDE REFERRAL CRITERIA FOR SPECIALIST CLINICS COMMUNICATIONS PACK: April 2026

Children's orthopaedics

Are your local care pathways ready?

Please check that your region's local care pathways are ready before publishing.

Background information

From **20 April 2026**, referrals for **children's orthopaedic conditions** will be assessed against new statewide referral criteria in all Victorian public hospitals.

Statewide referral criteria streamline access to specialist clinics in public hospitals by reducing inappropriate referrals and overall wait times. They assist clinicians to know when a referral to a public specialist clinic is appropriate, and what information is required to do so.

The Victorian Department of Health has developed and published new statewide referral criteria for 12 children's orthopaedics conditions:

- [Assessment of atraumatic back and spine conditions in children](#)
- [Assessment of atraumatic hip conditions in children](#)
- [Assessment of atraumatic knee conditions in children](#)
- [Assessment of atraumatic shoulder conditions in children](#)
- [Assessment of non-traumatic foot and ankle conditions in children](#)
- [Back trauma in children](#)
- [Clavicle and shoulder trauma in children](#)
- [Foot and ankle trauma in children](#)
- [Hip trauma in children](#)
- [Knee trauma in children](#)
- [Suspected or confirmed bone or soft-tissue tumour in children](#)
- [Upper limb and hand trauma 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 is the quickest way to understand a local public hospital's requirements. It is also a helpful way to review management of these conditions when referral to specialist clinics is not indicated.

This project is supported by the Victorian Government

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The benefit of local care pathways

Local care pathways offer specific clinical advice. This includes alternative conservative management options and referral pathways, such as suitable allied health options.

Referrals that do not meet the criteria will be declined and returned. Referrers should receive a letter from the health service clearly stating why.

Primary health networks (PHN) have been funded to support the adoption of statewide referral criteria by primary health providers by including them in [local care pathways](#) that are available across Victoria. They can be found in the HealthPathways websites hosted by Eastern Melbourne, North Western Melbourne, Murray, and Western Victoria PHNs. Gippsland and South Eastern Melbourne PHNs have separate clinical and referral pathways.

Alternatively, the statewide referral criteria can be viewed on the 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 orthopaedics** referrals to **orthopaedics services** come into effect from **20 April 2026**.
- These criteria provide clear and concise guidance for a limited number of commonly presenting conditions where referral for specialist opinion and management is indicated.
- To ensure patients can be placed on a specialist clinic wait list, 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](#), [Gippsland Pathways](#) or [SEMPHN clinical and referral pathways](#) 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.

News item for GP newsletters

Title: Statewide referral criteria – new suite for children's orthopaedics conditions.

New statewide referral criteria for 12 children's orthopaedics conditions come into effect from 20 April 2026 in all Victorian public hospitals.

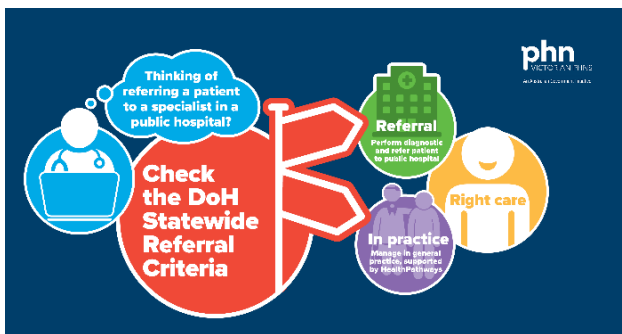
Patients can be placed on a specialist clinic wait list when a referring GP provides information showing the referral meets the new criteria.

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

The children's orthopaedics suite joins 20 suites of specialist referral criteria already in existence across Victoria.

Social media messages and graphics

Message 1:



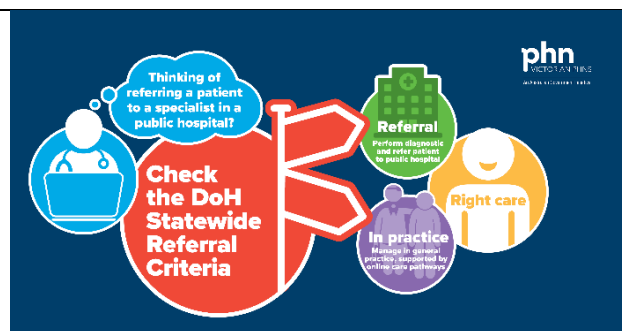
Statewide referral criteria are now in effect for 12 children's orthopaedics conditions in public hospitals.

Statewide referral criteria 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 SEMPLN and GPHN

Message 2:



New statewide referral criteria are now in effect within Victorian public hospitals for 12 orthopaedics conditions for children.

Check your local HealthPathways or online care 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