A patient makes an appointment with your practice.

How to decide whether the referral is valid:
- Have you received it on or prior to the consultation date?
- Is it in writing, signed and dated?
- Does the referral predate the consultation?

How to decide whether the referral is in date:
- Referred by a GP – 12 months from the date of the first specialist consultation (not the date of the referral) unless stated otherwise
- Referred by specialist - the longer of three months or, if the patient is admitted, the duration of admission.

TIP: Do not ask a referring doctor to backdate a referral or do so yourself. It may be fraud.

SINGLE COURSE OF TREATMENT
This involves an initial attendance and the continued management/treatment up to a stage where the patient is referred back to the care of the referring doctor. It also includes any subsequent review of the patient’s condition that may be necessary. Such a review may be initiated by either the referring doctor or the specialist/consultant physician.

- Request a new valid referral before seeing the patient.
- Does the referring doctor deem it necessary for the patient’s condition to be reviewed?
- Was the patient last seen by a specialist outside the currency of the last referral?
- Was the patient last seen by a specialist more than nine months ago?

- An initial attendance (e.g. item 104, 110) may be itemised.
- Does the valid referral relate to a condition to be treated (even if the referring doctor’s provisional diagnosis is incorrect or absent.)
- Does the consultation the first in a ‘single course of treatment’?

TIP: The duration of the referral commences on the day of the initial consultation with the specialist, not the date on which the referral is written.