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**The NHS is providing advanced eye scans closer to home for tens of thousands of people with diabetes which could save up to 120,000 hospital appointments a year and help prevent life-changing sight loss.**

People with diabetes can develop a condition known as diabetic retinopathy, which is caused by high blood sugar levels damaging the back of the eye (retina). It can cause blindness if left undiagnosed and untreated but regular eye screening appointments can pick up problems early on.

The rollout of optical coherence tomography (OCT) scans means around 60,000 people with diabetes can receive advanced screening outside a traditional hospital setting, such as some larger GP practices, community hospitals or mobile vans across the country, which will save hundreds of thousands of appointments, freeing up hospital care for people who need it most. Around four million people are currently registered with the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme, and 3.3 million have routine digital screening every one or two years. It is expected around 60,000 people who are already showing signs of eye disease will take part in OCT screening, which is offered to people at higher risk of diabetic retinopathy. Previously under a third of services were offering OCT, and not equitably in all parts of the country. NHS staff are now being trained in OCT screening, and all eye care services are expected to be using the technology by next October.

Ophthalmology is one of the busiest outpatient specialities in secondary care and makes up almost one tenth (8%) of the entire waiting list, with more than 500,000 ophthalmology operations every year and more than 7.5 million outpatient appointments.

It is estimated that 120,000 hospital ophthalmology appointments are set to be saved through OCT, once rolled out across the country, helping ease hospital backlogs and it is expected the number of hospital appointments saved will continue to rise.

**Steve Russell, NHS National Director for Vaccinations and Screening, said:** “It’s fantastic news that these advanced eye scans will be available closer to home for thousands of people with diabetes across the country. “This technology will help us find and treat diabetic eye conditions early, helping minimise and prevent sight loss, and it also means that thousands of appointments in traditional hospital settings could be saved, which is great news for the NHS.”

## **What to expect at your bowel screening hospital appointment**

An NHS bowel cancer screening service has issued a new video with information about what patients can expect when they attend a screening appointment.

The video is part of a joint campaign by health organisations and local authorities across the Tees Valley – set up to help raise awareness of bowel cancer.

Staff in the Tees bowel screening service, run by North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, have recorded the footage to help patients who are invited to hospital for a colonoscopy.

This procedure involves using a flexible tube (endoscope) with a camera and light to examine the bowel for signs of cancer.

Esther Mireku, public health consultant at the trust, has been leading work to improve the number of people taking part in the screening process for bowel cancer and who attend follow-up appointments.

Dr Mireku said: “For a number of months health and care experts from across the region have come together to help overcome challenges in diagnosing and treating bowel cancer as early as we can.

“One of these has been encouraging all of those people who have been invited to hospital for an appointment.

“By giving this group of people as much information as we can and introducing them to some of the staff and to the unit itself, we are hoping this may reduce any concerns or anxieties they may have about what will happen.”

The video includes information about what will happen when patients arrive in the unit, including waiting in the reception area, being taken to the admission room, then to the changing room and to the endoscopy room to meet the team.

The procedure will then take place and following this the patient will be taken to the recovery area to go through the results of their test with a health professional.

Kelley Williamson, specialist bowel screening practitioner, says in the video: “If we do see signs of bowel cancer in the test, the chances are because you’ve taken part in the bowel cancer screening we have found it early and it is very treatable.”

As part of the national bowel cancer screening programme, every person aged 50 to 74 in Tees is sent a test in the post every two years.

This is posted back to a laboratory where it is tested and, if any traces of blood are found in it, an invitation is sent to attend hospital for the colonoscopy.

The campaign is being jointly led by North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, the Northern Cancer Alliance, South of Tyne and Wear Pathology Centre, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Hartlepool Borough Council.

For more information about bowel cancer screening, visit the NHS information page or call the national helpline on 0800 707 60 60.

**To view the video, visit**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNTnWIBxDu8>**