

Provincial Adult Otolaryngology Referral Pathway

About this Pathway

Referral pathways help referring providers know where to send referrals and what information to include. These guidelines were created, updated, and co-designed with primary care, specialty care and patients.

We value all feedback to improve referral pathway. Please share your comments via [Online Survey](#) or scan the QR code.



Request Urgent Advice

(Patient may need to be seen immediately. Patients with conditions that require same day intervention and/or diagnostics but not hospitalization; not life threatening)

Call **RAAPID** urgent tele-advice:

- RAAPID North: 1-800-282-9911
- RAAPID South: 1-800-661-1700

Request Emergency Consultation

(patient NEEDS to be seen immediately)

Call **RAAPID** or send to **Emergency Department via 911** as appropriate.

Review Clinical Pathway

(for guidance on referral process, if available)

A **clinical pathway** may be available to guide care options for your patient's condition:

Provincial

- [Head & Neck Cancer Diagnosis & Referral Pathway](#)
- [Rhinosinusitis Primary Care Clinical Pathway](#)

Calgary

- [Neurology Vertigo Pathway](#)

If you have any questions while using a clinical pathway or if a clinical pathway is not available, please request non-urgent advice.

Request Non-Urgent Advice

(when uncertain whether to submit a referral)

Access **non-urgent specialist advice** online or by telephone:

Calgary Zone: **Netcare eReferral eConsult**

- Advice within 5 calendar days.
- Submit request online at albertanetcare.ca.
- For more information, visit albertanetcare.ca/eReferral.htm.

North and Edmonton Zones: **ConnectMD**

- Advice available within 48 hours, Monday to Friday (except statutory holidays). Request advice:
- Online at pcnconnectmd.com/non-urgent-advice-request.
- By phone at 1-844-633-2263.
- For more information, visit pcnconnectmd.com.

Calgary Zone: **Specialist Link**

- Tele-advice available within 1 hour, Monday to Friday (except statutory holidays).
- Request call-back at 1-844-962-5465.
- For more information, visit www.specialistlink.ca.

Request Non-Urgent Referral

(when patient requires non-urgent referral)

Submit a referral using the process below:

1. Complete a referral letter including the reason for referral. Tip: review the [QuRE Referral/Consult Checklist](#) for high-quality referral guidelines. A form is also available (coming soon)
2. Attach all mandatory information to the referral.
3. **Edmonton only, other zones coming soon:** Fax the completed referral to the FAST (Facilitated Access to Specialized Treatment) central access and intake program as listed in the Program Contacts section.

If you have questions about a previously submitted but unassigned referral, call the FAST office at 1-833-553-3278. If you have questions about an assigned referral, please contact the specialist office directly.

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Facial Plastic Surgery	Head and Neck Cancer		Other
Ear Deformity Nasal Deformity Facial Deformity Facial Nerve Paralysis (Chronic Facial Palsy >10 days) Disorder of Eyelid Skin Cancer	Suspected Head and Neck Cancer		Obstructive Sleep Apnea Consult for Otolaryngology Surgery (Other)

Program Contacts

	North Zone	Edmonton Zone	Central Zone	Calgary Zone	South Zone
Urgent Advice or Emergency Consultation	RAAPID North Tel 1-800-282-9911	RAAPID North Tel 1-800-282-9911	RAAPID North Tel 1-800-282-9911 RAAPID South Tel 1-800-661-1700	RAAPID South Tel 1-800-661-1700	RAAPID South Tel 1-800-661-1700
Non-Urgent Advice	ConnectMD Online request Tel 1-844-633-2263 pcnconnectmd.com	ConnectMD Online request Tel 1-844-633-2263 pcnconnectmd.com	Coming Soon	Specialist Link Tel 1-844-962-5465 specialistlink.ca	Coming Soon
Zone FAST* Team and other non-urgent referral contacts	North Zone FAST Team Coming Soon Tel 1-833-553-3278 ext. 1 Fax 1-833-627-7025	Edmonton Zone FAST Tel 1-833-553-3278 ext. 2 Fax 780-644-1790	Central Zone FAST Team Coming Soon Tel 1-833-553-3278 ext. 3 Fax 1-833-627-7022	Calgary Zone FAST Team Coming Soon Tel 1-833-553-3278 ext. 4 Fax 1-833-627-7023	South Zone FAST Team Coming Soon Tel 1-833-553-3278 ext. 5 Fax 1-833-627-7024

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EAR DISORDERS

Reason for Referral	Process	Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes)	Extra Info (If available)
<p>Hearing Loss not sudden</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon: Send referral to Zone FAST Team <p>Note: Sudden hearing loss should be treated within 14 days of onset. Order urgent audiogram to facilitate corticosteroid treatment within 14 days of onset. Call RAAPID/non-urgent phone advice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audiogram* 	
<p>Middle Ear Effusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> persistent >3 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon: Send referral to Zone FAST Team 	<p>Include the following information in the referral letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tinnitus (right/left/none) Draining ear (right/left/none) Ear pain (right/left/none) (describe characteristics) Otoscopy (normal/abnormal) Previous ear procedures/surgery (right/left and details) Previous history of head trauma or concussion History of Temporomandibular joint disorder (ear pain only) 	
<p>Acute Otitis Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recurrent >3 episodes in 6 months 			
<p>Tympanic Membrane Perforation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >3 months duration 			
<p>Ear Pain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> otalgia persistent >4 weeks or progressive or severe 			

EAR DISORDERS			
Reason for Referral	Process	Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes)	Extra Info (If available)
Foreign Body in Ear	All Zones: Call RAAPID /non-urgent phone advice		
Drainage From External Ear Canal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >3 months or unresponsive to treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon: Send referral to Zone FAST Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audiogram* (tinnitus and ear fullness/pressure only) <p>Include the following information in the referral letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Otoscopy (normal/abnormal) Previous ear procedures/surgery (right/left and details) Hearing loss History of ear infection Vertigo Ear Pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audiogram* (discharge from the ear)
Ear Pressure Sensation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes ear fullness, eustachian tube dysfunction 			
Tinnitus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider referral for the following: unilateral tinnitus with associated hearing loss, or pulsatile 			
Lesion of Ear Canal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon: Send referral to Zone FAST Team 		

EAR DISORDERS

Reason for Referral	Process	Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes)	Extra Info (If available)
<p>Vertigo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> with ear symptoms, i.e.. hearing loss and ear pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team (Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon); or Vestibular Clinics as per zonal processes. See Alberta Referral Directory for information on vestibular clinics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audiogram* showing signs of hearing loss Documentation of ear symptoms (i.e. tinnitus, ear pain) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment report and treatment response from vestibular physiotherapist For more information on vertigo management, go to: Neurology Vertigo Pathway

* There is no cost to audiograms completed at an AHS community audiology service, and there are urgent spaces available. There will be a cost to the assessment if done at a private practice clinic. See the [Alberta Referral Directory](#) for more information and use the search terms: “Community Audiology”.

HEAD, NECK, AND THROAT COMPLAINTS

Reason for Referral	Process	Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes)	Extra Info (If available)
<p>Chronic Airway Obstruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i.e. inspiratory stridor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon: Send referral to Zone FAST Team 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise tolerance Pulmonary function test
<p>Dysphagia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South and North Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team (for otolaryngology (coming soon) or general surgery. Calgary Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team for otolaryngology (coming soon) or GI CAT for GI. Central Zone: Send to referral to Zone FAST Team for otolaryngology (coming soon) or general surgery or refer to your local GI physician as per zonal processes. Edmonton Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team for otolaryngology or SHARPGI for GI. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include description of disease progression Imaging results if available Allied health reports if available (i.e. clinical dysphagia assessments)
<p>Facial Nerve Paralysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acute <10 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Zones: call RAAPID or request non-urgent phone advice Any suspicion of stroke, send to Emergency Department via 911 		

HEAD, NECK, AND THROAT COMPLAINTS

Reason for Referral	Process	Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes)	Extra Info (If available)
Globus Sensation	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>		<p>Include the following information if relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dysphagia • Painful Swallowing • History of reflux • Reflux symptoms • Voice changes • Investigations done (i.e. Barium swallow, modified barium swallow (Videofluoroscopic swallow study), CT Neck, Ultrasound neck)
<p>Change in Voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent dysphonia >4 weeks 	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p> <p>Note: If suspect cancer, go to the Head and Neck Cancer category of the pathway</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoking history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swallowing difficulties • Speech Language Pathology documentation
<p>Chronic Tonsillitis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >12 weeks • i.e. symptomatic tonsil stones, halitosis, chronic sore throat 	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>		
Recurrent Acute Tonsillitis	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throat swab history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant hospitalization • Treatment history

HEAD, NECK, AND THROAT COMPLAINTS

Reason for Referral	Process	Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes)	Extra Info (If available)
Salivary Gland Mass	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team</p> <p>Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p> <p>Note: If suspect cancer, go to the Head and Neck Cancer category of the pathway</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ultrasound
<p>Disorder of The Salivary Gland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • i.e. stones, inflammation 	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team</p> <p>Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ultrasound
<p>Mass of Soft Tissue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • head and neck mass or lesion • i.e. cyst, lipoma 	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team</p> <p>Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p> <p>Note: If suspect cancer, go to the Head and Neck Cancer category of the pathway</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If neck mass, consider ultrasound
<p>Lesion of Mouth and/or Pharynx</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • i.e. mucocele, leukoplakia, tonsil lesion, tongue lesion, ulcer 	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team</p> <p>Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p> <p>Note: If suspect cancer, go to the Head and Neck Cancer category of the pathway</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant weight loss due to pain with eating and swallowing

NOSE DISORDERS (RHINOLOGY)

Reason for Referral	Process	Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes)	Extra Info (If available)
<p>Sinusitis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rhinosinusitis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to the CLINICAL PATHWAY: RHINOSINUSITIS to help guide the care of your patient prior to referral. All Zones: if symptoms persist after completing the Rhinosinusitis clinical pathway, send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CT sinus ordered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic sinusitis is confirmed when there is evidence of sinusitis on the CT scan. If the CT scan does not show evidence of sinusitis, see the rhinitis reason for referral Sinus x-rays are not an effective diagnostic test for this condition
<p>Nasal Obstruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i.e. deviated nasal septum, nasal polyps, unilateral nasal obstruction 	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History, physical exam findings and treatments attempted
<p>Epistaxis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> failed conservative treatment 	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>		
<p>Fracture of Nasal Bone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≤7 days-URGENT REFERRAL: Call Surgeon on Call through RAAPID >7 days: See Nasal Deformity Reason for Referral 		
<p>Nasal Mass</p>	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p> <p>Note: If cancer is suspected, go to the Head and Neck Cancer category of this referral pathway</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial Head & Neck Cancer Diagnosis & Referral Pathway
<p>Rhinitis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> failed conservative treatment. i.e. nasal discharge/post-nasal drip/nasal stuffiness 	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failed nasal corticosteroid trial (4-6 weeks) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If sinusitis is a consideration see CLINICAL PATHWAY: RHINOSINUSITIS

THYROID AND PARATHYROID			
Reason for Referral	Process	Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes)	Extra Info (If available)
<p>Suspected Parathyroid Disease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hypercalcemia or elevated PTH or incidental imaging finding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edmonton and North Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon Calgary, Central, South zone – Consider referral to endocrinology, if available, otherwise send to Zone FAST Team (Coming soon) 	<p>Within 6 months of referral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serum calcium, PTH 	
<p>Thyroid Mass</p>	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>	<p>Within 1 year of referral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TSH Thyroid Ultrasound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fine needle aspiration if recommended based on imaging and availability

FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY

Reason for Referral	Process	Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes)	Extra Info (If available)
<p>Ear Deformity</p>	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial consultations are insured. Procedures may or may not be insured.
<p>Nasal Deformity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes: reconstruction, septoplasty and rhinoplasty 	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial consultations are insured. Procedures may or may not be insured.
<p>Facial Deformity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes: facial injury and facial scar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon Facial bone fractures refer to plastic surgery or oral and maxillofacial surgery 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial consultations are insured. Procedures may or may not be insured. Clinical photograph.
<p>Facial Nerve Paralysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic Facial Palsy >10 days 	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial consultations are insured. Procedures may or may not be insured. Please indicate if the patient is unable to protect their eye to assist with clinical triage.

FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY

Reason for Referral	Process	Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes)	Extra Info (If available)
<p>Disorder Of Eyelid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facial paralysis post-cancer treatment, excessive upper eyelid skin, ptotic brows, ectropion, etc. 	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial consultations are insured. Procedures may or may not be insured.
<p>Skin Cancer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head and neck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calgary and Central Zone: Send referral to Dermatology as per local processes South, Edmonton, and North Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team (Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon) or Dermatology as per zonal processes 		

HEAD AND NECK CANCER

Category information taken from the Provincial Head & Neck Cancer Diagnosis & Referral Pathway

[Provincial Head & Neck Cancer Diagnosis & Referral Pathway](#)

Please follow this pathway PRIOR to sending in a referral. Refer when patient has physical exam finding(s) and/or symptom(s) that have lasted longer than 3 weeks despite management; or the patient has prior suspicious imaging. Note: for confirmed oral lesion, refer immediately.

Reason for Referral	Process	Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes)	Extra Info (If available)
<p>Suspected Head And Neck Cancer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> neck lump or facial mass oral and oropharyngeal mass or ulcer persistent hoarseness with history of tobacco and/or alcohol use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to the Provincial Head & Neck Cancer Diagnosis & Referral Pathway to help guide the care of your patient prior to referral ALL Zones: refer to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon Oral lesions may be seen by Otolaryngology or Oral & Maxillofacial surgery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List high risk symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CT neck ordered with contrast (indicate ordered in referral letter) but do not delay referral while waiting for CT scan. Note: Some oral & maxillofacial treatments may not be covered through Alberta Health Care Insurance (i.e. dental fees). Please refer to the Provincial Head & Neck Cancer Diagnosis & Referral Pathway for list of high risk symptoms.

OTHER			
Reasons for referral	Process	Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes)	Extra Info (If available)
<p>Obstructive Sleep Apnea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate to Severe OSA with failed CPAP treatment warranting surgical consideration 	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sleep Study showing moderate to severe findings History of CPAP 	
<p>Consult For Otolaryngology (Other)</p>	<p>All Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team Edmonton zone only, other zones coming soon</p>		

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