

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 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 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 [referral form](#) is also available.
2. Attach all mandatory information to the referral.
3. 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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Program Contacts

| | North Zone | Edmonton Zone | Central Zone | Calgary Zone | South Zone |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Urgent Advice or Emergency Consultation | RAAPID North Tel 1-800-282-9911 www.ahs.ca/RAAPID | RAAPID North Tel 1-800-282-9911 www.ahs.ca/RAAPID | RAAPID North Tel 1-800-282-9911 RAAPID South Tel 1-800-661-1700 www.ahs.ca/RAAPID | RAAPID South Tel 1-800-661-1700 www.ahs.ca/RAAPID | RAAPID South Tel 1-800-661-1700 www.ahs.ca/RAAPID |
| Non-Urgent Advice | ConnectMD Online request Tel 1-844-633-2263 pcnconnectmd.com | ConnectMD Online request Tel 1-844-633-2263 pcnconnectmd.com | | Specialist Link Tel 1-844-962-5465 specialistlink.ca | |
| Zone FAST* Team and other non-urgent referral contacts | North Zone FAST Team 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 Tel 1-833-553-3278 ext. 3 Fax 1-833-627-7022 | Calgary Zone Refer to Alberta Referral Directory for otolaryngology clinic and specialist contact numbers. | South Zone FAST Team 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) |
| Hearing Loss <ul style="list-style-type: none">not sudden | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. <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 or request non-urgent phone advice.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Audiogram* <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 concussionHistory of Temporomandibular joint disorder (ear pain only) | |
| Middle Ear Effusion <ul style="list-style-type: none">persistent >3 months | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | |
| Acute Otitis Media <ul style="list-style-type: none">recurrent >3 episodes in 6 months | | | |
| Tympanic Membrane Perforation <ul style="list-style-type: none">>3 months duration | | | |
| Ear Pain <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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">All Zones: Call RAAPID or request 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">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | <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 lossHistory of ear infectionVertigoEar 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">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | |

| EAR DISORDERS | | | |
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| 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">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team or Vestibular Clinics as per zonal processes. See Alberta Referral Directory for information on vestibular clinics.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology 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 lossDocumentation of ear symptoms (i.e. tinnitus, ear pain) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Assessment report and treatment response from vestibular physiotherapistFor more information on vertigo management, go to: Neurology Vertigo Pathway |

* See the [Alberta Referral Directory](#) for more information on booking an audiological assessment within AHS and use the search term: “Community Audiology”. See [AADL Private Practice Hearing Vendors](#) for an AADL vendor list.

| HEAD, NECK, AND THROAT COMPLAINTS | | | |
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| Reason for Referral | Process | Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes) | Extra Info (If available) |
| Chronic Airway Obstruction <ul style="list-style-type: none">i.e. inspiratory stridor | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Exercise tolerancePulmonary function test |
| Dysphagia | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South and North Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team (for otolaryngology or general surgery.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice or GI CAT for GI.Central Zone: Send to referral to Zone FAST Team for otolaryngology 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 progressionImaging results if availableAllied health reports if available (i.e. clinical dysphagia assessments) |
| Facial Nerve Paralysis <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 | | | |
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| Reason for Referral | Process | Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes) | Extra Info (If available) |
| Globus Sensation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.• Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | <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) |

| HEAD, NECK, AND THROAT COMPLAINTS | | | |
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| Reason for Referral | Process | Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes) | Extra Info (If available) |
| Change in Voice <ul style="list-style-type: none">Persistent dysphonia >4 weeks | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. <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 difficultiesSpeech Language Pathology documentation |
| Chronic Tonsillitis <ul style="list-style-type: none">>12 weeksi.e. symptomatic tonsil stones, halitosis, chronic sore throat | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | |
| Recurrent Acute Tonsillitis | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Throat swab history | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Relevant hospitalizationTreatment history |

| HEAD, NECK, AND THROAT COMPLAINTS | | | |
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| Reason for Referral | Process | Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes) | Extra Info (If available) |
| Salivary Gland Mass | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.• Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. <p>Note: If suspect cancer, go to the Head and Neck Cancer category of the pathway.</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ultrasound |
| Disorder of The Salivary Gland <ul style="list-style-type: none">• i.e. stones, inflammation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.• Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ultrasound |
| Mass of Soft Tissue <ul style="list-style-type: none">• head and neck mass or lesion• i.e. cyst, lipoma | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.• Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. <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 |

| HEAD, NECK, AND THROAT COMPLAINTS | | | |
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| Reason for Referral | Process | Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes) | Extra Info (If available) |
| Lesion of Mouth and/or Pharynx <ul style="list-style-type: none">i.e. mucocele, leukoplakia, tonsil lesion, tongue lesion, ulcer | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. <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) | | | |
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| Reason for Referral | Process | Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes) | Extra Info (If available) |
| Sinusitis <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.South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: If symptoms persist after completing the Rhinosinusitis clinical pathway, send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: If symptoms persist after completing the Rhinosinusitis clinical pathway, refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practices. | <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 referralSinus x-rays are not an effective diagnostic test for this condition |
| Nasal Obstruction <ul style="list-style-type: none">i.e. deviated nasal septum, nasal polyps, unilateral nasal obstruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">History, physical exam findings and treatments attempted |
| Epistaxis <ul style="list-style-type: none">failed conservative treatment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | |
| Fracture of Nasal Bone | <ul style="list-style-type: none">≤7 days-URGENT REFERRAL: Call Surgeon on Call through RAAPID.>7 days: See Nasal Deformity Reason for Referral. | | |

| NOSE DISORDERS (RHINOLOGY) | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reason for Referral | Process | Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes) | Extra Info (If available) |
| Nasal Mass | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. <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 |
| Rhinitis <ul style="list-style-type: none">failed conservative treatment, i.e. nasal discharge/post-nasal drip/nasal stuffiness | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | <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 | | | |
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| Reason for Referral | Process | Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes) | Extra Info (If available) |
| Suspected Parathyroid Disease <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.Central, South zone – Consider referral to endocrinology, if available, otherwise send to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Consider referral to endocrinology, otherwise refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | Within 6 months of referral: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Serum calcium, PTH | |
| Thyroid Mass | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | Within 1 year of referral: <ul style="list-style-type: none">TSHThyroid 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) |
| Ear Deformity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.• Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial consultations are insured. Procedures may or may not be insured. |
| Nasal Deformity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes: reconstruction, septoplasty and rhinoplasty | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.• Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial consultations are insured. Procedures may or may not be insured. |
| Facial Deformity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes: facial injury and facial scar | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.• Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice.• Facial bone fractures: refer to plastic surgery or oral and maxillofacial surgery referral pathways. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial consultations are insured. Procedures may or may not be insured.• Clinical photograph. |

| FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reason for Referral | Process | Mandatory Info (Essential investigations & timeframes) | Extra Info (If available) |
| Facial Nerve Paralysis <ul style="list-style-type: none">Chronic Facial Palsy >10 days | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | <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. |
| Disorder Of Eyelid <ul style="list-style-type: none">Facial paralysis post-cancer treatment, excessive upper eyelid skin, ptotic brows, ectropion, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Initial consultations are insured. Procedures may or may not be insured. |
| Skin Cancer <ul style="list-style-type: none">Head and neck | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South, Edmonton, and North Zones: Send referral to Zone FAST Team or Dermatology as per zonal processes.Calgary and Central Zone: Send referral to Dermatology as per local 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) |
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| <p>Suspected Head And Neck Cancer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">neck lump or facial massoral and oropharyngeal mass or ulcerpersistent 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.South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team .Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice.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) |
| Obstructive Sleep Apnea <ul style="list-style-type: none">Moderate to Severe OSA with failed CPAP treatment warranting surgical consideration | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sleep Study showing moderate to severe findingsHistory of CPAP | |
| Consult For Otolaryngology (Other) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">South/Central/Edmonton/North Zone: Send referral to Zone FAST Team.Calgary Zone: Refer direct to otolaryngology as per current zonal practice. | | |

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