

Clinical investigations

To operate a reliable and defined process for recording and managing clinical investigations, there should be a clear indication of what action was initiated on all reports to enable correct tracking and management. The principle is that patient reports are not lost in the system and are processed to ensure the right people get the right information within the time frames identified by the practice. For every report or test there must be a person in the practice responsible for management and tracking. Good practice requires that practices should keep a record of telephone conversations with patients about test results, noting the date and who advised the patient.

Indicator 24

The practice has an effective system for the management of clinical correspondence, test results and other investigations

Criteria		Rationale
24.1 ★★	There is a documented policy that describes how laboratory results, imaging reports, investigations and clinical correspondence are tracked and managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">There is an agreed and consistent approach to the tracking of health information to manage and assist continuity of care
24.2 ★★	All incoming test results or other investigations are sighted and actioned by the team member who requested them or by a designated deputy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Facilitation of patient results and investigations improves continuity of care and ensures a clear pathway to an outcome
24.3 ★★	Patients are provided with information about the practice procedure for notification of test results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Patients must be notified about important test results and referralsPatients have rights and responsibilities for their own health care and must be provided with information so that there is a shared understanding about the process
24.4 ★★	The practice can demonstrate how they identify and track potentially significant investigations and urgent referrals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">There is an agreed and consistent approach to the tracking of health information to manage and assist continuity of careThe HDC considers that the need for tracking is especially important where serious pathology is suspected
24.5 ★★	A record is kept of communications with patients informing them about test results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Documenting communications about test results is essential record keeping for continuity of care, and helps mitigate risk

Further information

Reports must be processed to ensure the right people get the right information within the time frames identified by the practice.

- Nominated members of the practice team should take responsibility for ensuring all incoming test results and medical reports are acted upon.
- For advice on notification of patient test results, see the Health and Disability Commissioner (HDC) opinion C01H-DC00389—www.hdc.org.nz

Resources

Health and Disability Commissioner: www.hdc.org.nz

The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners. Managing patients test results—minimising error. Wellington, NZ: RNZCGP; Discussion Paper 2003; 2nd edition 2005.