

Press release Tuesday 6 2017

Health services in Swindon ask the public to choose the right service at this busy time

Winter has arrived and with this the demand for NHS services increases significantly as cold weather means there are more slips, trips and injuries. Generally, more people feel unwell during the winter as they spend more time indoors and coughs and colds are passed around the family, friends and colleagues at work.

Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (GWH) is experiencing increased pressures, with people attending its accident and emergency department (ED).

Dr Guy Rooney, Medical Director, Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said:

“The last few days have been particularly busy for us, which has meant some less urgent patients attending the Emergency Department have had to wait longer than usual.

“Many people automatically turn to the hospital if they feel they cannot get a quick appointment elsewhere, but we’d ask they take a few minutes to think about whether that really is the best option for them.

“Choosing the right option first time not only allows us to focus our attention on the people who need care the most, but also improves a patient’s chance of being seen quicker.”

ED is for patients requiring emergency care for serious and life-threatening conditions. Please use the service carefully so it can best support those who need it most - people with chest pain or blood loss, or who are blacking out or choking. We can all help by not over-burdening the service and using it only when we need to.

Consider calling NHS 111, it is the non-emergency number to speak to a highly trained adviser. Callers will be asked a series of questions to assess their symptoms and immediately directed to the best medical care for them.

The service can also help patients access the GP out-of-hours service to receive treatment overnight or arrange an urgent GP appointment. In the case of serious injury or illness, NHS 111 can despatch an ambulance to the patient or advise them on emergency options.

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. For immediate life-threatening emergencies always dial 999.

Gill May, Executive Nurse, of Swindon Clinical Commissioning Group, said: “NHS services always come under increased pressure in winter especially when we see a rise in respiratory illnesses at this time of year, but as ever our hard-working NHS staff are pulling out all the stops to provide care for patients.

“We have strong systems in place which closely monitor rising demands and NHS providers work closely together to ensure they are managed properly. The NHS belongs to all of us, and everyone has a part to play in helping the NHS manage these pressures.

“If you are normally fit and well, you can help our doctors, nurses and paramedics by thinking carefully about alternative NHS services before calling 999 or going to ED. That could include using the Walk-in Centre, the Urgent Care Centre, visiting pharmacists, who are expert in advising on common winter illnesses, or seeing your GP.”

Dr Peter Mack, Clinical Chair at Swindon CCG, said:

“Your GP is your first port of call for on-going illnesses or injuries, except life-threatening emergencies. However, remember a range of common illness and injuries can be treated at home simply by combining a well-stocked medicine cabinet with plenty of rest. Your GP provides a range of services by appointment and will be able to assess your immediate needs as well as refer you into a specialist service if necessary. Many surgeries open longer hours now; however, if your surgery is closed, dial '111' to speak with a trained adviser quickly.”

Dr Rooney, adds: “We are also asking families, friends and carers of patients at the hospital to help us with timely discharges by: Making arrangement to be available when the person is ready to leave hospital; make their home comfortable for their return; arrange help around the home; arrange transport, clothes and shoes to leave hospital in; put the heating on if needed; stock their home with food and make sure they have their keys to get in.”

There are a range of on the day urgent care services available including:

Walk-in centre at Swindon NHS Medical Centre, Islington Street, Swindon

Open 8.00am-6.00pm, 7 days a week, including bank holidays.

Urgent Care Centre, Great Western Hospital site, Swindon

Open 24/7, 365 days a year

Children and young people's clinic, from the age of three months to 18 years

Call: 0300 111 0088 for your nearest clinic

Chippenham Minor Injury Unit, Chippenham Community Hospital, SN15 2AJ

Open 7.00am-11.00pm, 365 days a year

Tel: 01249 456403.

Cirencester Minor Injury Unit, Cirencester Hospital, GL7 1UY

Open 8.00am-11.00pm, 365 days a year

Tel: 0300 421 6351

For more information about looking after yourself this winter, visit www.nhs.uk which provides up-to-date and expert advice on a range of illnesses and complaints.

Notes to editors

For more information, please contact:

SCCG: The Communications and Engagement Team on 01793 683 700 or email communications@swindonccg.nhs.uk

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About Swindon Clinical Commissioning Group

- Swindon CCG's Mission: to optimise the healthcare of the people of Swindon and Shrivenham.
- Swindon CCG's vision: to ensure everyone in Swindon and Shrivenham lives a healthy, safe, fulfilling and independent life and is supported by thriving and connected communities.
- Swindon CCG covers a population of 230,473 and comprises 25 member GP practices.
- Swindon CCG commissions c£235m of local health services.

About Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

For more information, visit www.gwh.nhs.uk.