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Press Release

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Keep Safe this Christmas

Staff from the Royal United Hospital emergency department are urging people to enjoy Christmas and New Year celebrations safely and to use emergency health services sensibly.

The festive season is a time when people enjoy extra drinking and eating but excess alcohol and drug incidents lead to extra pressure on the emergency services.

The RUH emergency department sees around 1,300 patients a week. During the festive season this figure usually increases, leading to further pressures on staff and putting seriously ill patients at additional risk.

RUH lead consultant for emergency care Dominic Williamson says: "Our doors are always open for those with serious injuries or illnesses. With the Christmas and New Year holiday period coming up we would ask everyone to take a moment to think whether they really need to come to this department or whether they could get treatment in a more appropriate way. As the name of our department suggests we are here for emergencies rather than for treating very minor injuries or ailments."

There are a number of ways people can help, or alternative services they can access, to ease pressures on the hospital's emergency services over Christmas and New Year.

Keep a well stocked medicine cabinet

Self care is the best option when treating very minor illnesses and injuries which strike you down over the winter period.

NHS Direct

A confidential health helpline available 24 hours a day, NHS Direct provides advice about different health conditions or ailments. Call 0845 4647 or visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Ask a local pharmacist for advice

Your pharmacist can often advise on remedies for minor health problems, and can provide emergency contraception. A list of pharmacies open over the Christmas and New Year period is available from your local NHS Service, for example, NHS Bath and North East Somerset, NHS Somerset and NHS Wiltshire.

Out of hours GP

When GP surgeries are closed, patients in the NHS Bath and North East Somerset area can contact the GP out of hours service for emergency advice on 01980 626226. Patients who live in Kennet, North Wiltshire or West Wiltshire should call 0300 111 5717. Your GP surgery answer-phone will also have details of the on-call GP.

Walk-in centre

The Riverside Walk-in Centre is located on James Street West, Bath, BA1 2BT and usually opens from 8am - 8pm throughout Christmas, telephone 01225 474242. The centre offers treatment for minor injuries and illnesses and can provide emergency contraception.

Your local community hospital

Some community hospitals have minor injury units where patients can receive treatment for minor injuries such as cuts, bruises, sprains and simple fractures. Check opening times before visiting as these can vary.

Emergency contraception

Bath contraception and sexual health (CASH) clinic at the Riverside Walk-in Centre can provide emergency contraception, on 01225 474242 during opening hours. Contact the emergency 'out of hours' service on 01980 626226 for advice on where to obtain contraception. There is also a CASH clinic at Keynsham Health Clinic, telephone 0117 986 2423.

Emergency dental services

Patients with a dental emergency who are unable to find a dentist can ring the dental access service on 01225 474243, or the out of hours service on 08451 206680.

Ends**Notes for editors**

There will be a photo opportunity with lead consultant for emergency services Dominic Williamson between 3pm and 4pm on Thursday 18 December. Please call Rachel on 01225 825849 for further information.