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**Bath and
North East Somerset**

Media Release

‘Choose Well and Stay well this Christmas’

As we gear up for the festive season, emergency department staff are urging people to do what they can to stay well during the Christmas and New Year break, or if they do need emergency healthcare services, to choose these appropriately.

The message is part of an established national campaign, called Choose Well, which has recently been adopted by NHS Bath and North East Somerset (NHS B&NES). The idea of Choose Well is to advise people about which NHS service is appropriate for them – everything from a pharmacy to hospital, depending on their situation. Choose Well also urges people to attend a hospital Emergency Department ONLY in a true emergency. Consultant in Emergency Medicine at the RUH, Dominic Williamson says: “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, ailments, slips and trips. We see around 1,300 patients a week. During the festive season, this figure usually increases as we see patients who could have received treatment elsewhere, or as a result of excess alcohol or drugs intake. Time spent treating these patients increases the pressures on staff as well as the risks to our more vulnerable patients. However, it’s important to remind everyone that our doors are always open for those with serious injuries or illnesses.”

Rhona MacDonald, the Chief Executive of NHS Bath and North East Somerset, adds, “The ED has a key role to play in treating people who are seriously ill or injured. It is vital that hospital staff are able to focus on treating patients in most need of this specialist care. Under the Choose Well campaign we are encouraging people to think about the whole range of healthcare services, which for non-emergency care can be much more convenient and appropriate to their needs.”

Continued over:

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 Wiltshire should call 0300 111 5717. Your GP surgery answer-phone will also have details of the on-call GP.

Bath NHS Healthcare Centre (The Riverside Walk-In Centre)

The centre is on James Street West, Bath, BA1 2BT and is open to registered and unregistered patients with or without an appointment, 365 days per year between 8am – 8pm. Call 01225 478 811 or visit www.bathnhshealthcarecentre.nhs.uk. The centre offers treatment for minor injuries and illnesses, and can provide emergency contraception.

Paulton Community Hospital minor injuries unit

Patients can receive treatment from a nurse for minor injuries such as cuts, bruises and sprains. The minor injuries unit at Paulton is open 24 hours a day seven days a week.

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 08451 206680.

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