

## Media information

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# PATIENTS URGED TO CONSIDER A&E ALTERNATIVES

Due to current high level of demand at the Emergency Department of the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust (the RUH), local people are being asked to consider accessing advice and treatment from medical professionals in other settings.

It is estimated that at least one in four people attending emergency departments could be treated more quickly and efficiently elsewhere.

**Dr Ian Orpen**, a local GP and Clinical Chair of BaNES Clinical Commissioning Group said:

*“As a GP, I understand that when people are feeling ill they want to see a doctor straightaway. However, in many instances their illness can be treated by over-the-counter medication and advice from their local pharmacist.*

*“I would strongly urge those with minor ailments to look at the other options available to them first before going to the Emergency Department. If you call 999 or visit an A&E when it is not an emergency then you are likely to wait a long time for treatment. You may also hold up treatment for someone who genuinely needs it.*

*“I would also like to say a big thank you to all the dedicated NHS staff who are working so hard to maintain services and high quality patient care at this very challenging time.”*

**Helen Blanchard**, Director of Nursing and Midwifery at the RUH said:

*“Demand on services at the RUH is currently very high. Last week, we saw a 17% increase in emergency ambulances coming to the RUH, compared to the same week last year. It has been the busiest week we’ve ever experienced.*

*“Our staff are working incredibly hard to improve the flow of patients through the hospital during this busy period. We are working closely with our community partners to support initiatives that provide alternatives to hospital admission and to enable early supportive discharge, particularly for older patients.*

*“We always strive to provide the best care possible for our patients, especially during times of high demand. However, when our time is taken up by minor issues such as coughs and colds it can delay us from seeing patients who are really sick and in need of urgent medical attention. Please think before you use A&E.”*

## **ENDS**

### Notes to Editors

The CCG recommends the following advice to patients needing health advice this winter:

#### **1. Ask your pharmacist**

Pharmacists are expert in many aspects of healthcare and can offer advice on a wide range of long-term conditions and common illnesses such as coughs, colds and stomach upsets. You don't need an appointment and many have private consultation areas, so they are a good first port of call. Your pharmacist will say if you need further medical attention.

#### **2. See your local GP**

GPs assess, treat and manage a whole range of health problems. They also provide health education, give vaccinations and carry out simple surgical procedures. Your GP will arrange a referral to a hospital specialist should you need it.

#### **3. Call 111 out of hours**

If your local pharmacy or GP surgery is closed then you can call 111 for urgent health advice. An adviser will ask you questions to assess your symptoms and then give you the advice you need or direct you straightaway to the best service for you in your area.

#### **4. A&E**

A&E Departments provide vital care for life-threatening emergencies such as loss of consciousness, suspected heart attacks, breathing difficulties or severe bleeding that cannot be stopped.

If you need help urgently but it's not an emergency then call 111 for advice as they may be able to book you an appointment to see a doctor or nurse practitioner at the new Urgent Care Centre next to A&E at the RUH.