

PRESS RELEASE

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NHS Wiltshire pleads ‘help us to help you’

NHS Wiltshire is urging patients to ‘help us to help you’ as they are currently experiencing unprecedented challenges and extreme pressure at A&E Departments across the county.

Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group is asking patients, families and carers to carefully consider whether a trip to A&E is the right course of action for their ailment, or whether other healthcare services, or even self-care is more appropriate.

Dr Rob Matthews, GP at Spa Medical Centre explains: “Our region’s hospitals are currently seeing an overwhelming number of people who are attending because they have common winter illnesses such as bad colds, viruses or stomach bugs and also for things like excessive alcohol consumption, broken finger nails and toothache. These ailments can and should be looked after at home with over the counter medication, plenty of fluids, rest and recuperation - they certainly do not need a trip to A&E.”

NHS Wiltshire wants patients to help by taking personal responsibility for their healthcare where they can and accessing the right healthcare service at the right time when required. For medical help and advice on where to go if it is not an emergency then the free NHS 111 number is available 24/7. Pharmacists are experts in many areas of healthcare and can also offer advice on a wide range of conditions and common illnesses such as coughs, colds and stomach upsets. GPs should always be the first port of call for most medical problems - unless it is a serious or life threatening emergency and then A&E is the right place to go.

With increased pressure across the system people are also asked to:

- Cancel unwanted medical appointments, so that others who need them can be seen more quickly.
- Offer to drive a family member or friend home from hospital
- Keep a well-stocked medicine cabinet to be able to treat yourself at home for minor illnesses
- Make sure elderly relatives are warm and have supplies in case of bad weather

Peter Jenkins, Chair of Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group adds: “We need patients to take responsibility for making the right decision about where to go for healthcare advice. Every year the NHS makes the same plea to the public and every year we continue to see inappropriate A&E attendances rise. We prepare for increases in attendance over the winter, because we expect that to happen, however when patients are turning up to A&E when they don’t need to be there it adds significant pressure to an already challenging situation.”