

choose

South Tyneside 
NHS Foundation Trust



January 6th, 2016

Appeal to use NHS services wisely

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust is appealing for the public's help to ensure that very sick patients receive the urgent treatment they need as emergency services come under significant pressure this winter.

Chief Operating Officer Michelle Arrowsmith said: "Since the start of the new year, we have experienced sustained demand on our A&E services at South Tyneside District Hospital, including from a significant minority whose problems could be better dealt with by a pharmacist or a GP.

"The key message we need to convey is that A&E departments like ours are for patients whose condition is urgent or life-threatening. The public can help our staff to do their job by choosing the right NHS service and not automatically turning up at A&E. This will help us to efficiently manage the very sick people who really need to be seen in hospital."

Mrs Arrowsmith added: "We would like to say a huge thank you to our partners, including neighbouring Trusts, NHS South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and South Tyneside Council for their support and to our staff, clinical and non-clinical, who, as usual, are responding magnificently to the challenges we are facing."

In the event of ailments such as coughs and colds, upset stomachs and general aches and pains, patients are advised to Think Pharmacy First. The campaign, developed by NHS South Tyneside CCG in close association with Gateshead and South Tyneside Local Pharmaceutical Committee, encourages people to get advice and medicines to treat common or less serious illnesses from a community pharmacy.

By asking their local pharmacist for advice and staying at home and treating themselves with painkillers, rest and plenty of fluids, they will also help to reduce the spread of viruses to vulnerable patients in NHS waiting rooms and will leave appointments available for those with serious health conditions who need to see a doctor or nurse this winter. Those with injuries that are over 48 hours old, or who have had low level pain for a few days, should see their GP.

Dr Matthew Walmsley, a local GP and Chair of NHS South Tyneside CCG, said: "When one of your family is unwell, the only thing on your mind is how to get the care they need, as quickly as possible, but it's worth stopping to think for a moment, to make sure you choose the right service.

"A&E departments have been under significant pressure recently and we should all make sure that we only visit there in the case of a real medical emergency. The majority of illnesses can be swiftly and safely dealt with by your local pharmacist or GP and you can also ring NHS 111 for advice on which service to access.

"I would ask all South Tyneside's residents to think carefully about how they can access the care they best need, without overburdening our already stretched emergency services."

Key messages for the public:

- A&E is for medical emergencies only e.g. chest pain, breathing difficulties, unconsciousness, severe loss of blood, choking, fitting and severe allergic reactions.
- If it is not an emergency, please seek help from your GP or pharmacist. Anyone unsure of where to go can call NHS 111.
- There are 39 pharmacies in South Tyneside, with 17 open on Saturdays and three offering evening opening and Sunday daytime opening (visit www.nhs.uk for details). Consultations with pharmacists are completely confidential and most pharmacies can offer a private area to talk about symptoms. If your condition is more serious, the pharmacist will be able to refer you to the right NHS service for your needs. Anyone worried about a child can discuss the problem with the pharmacist even if the child is not present.

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Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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