

PRESS RELEASE – 31 DECEMBER, 2018

Plea to public from South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS to ease pressure on emergency care this winter

South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts are appealing for the public's support as they deal with a festive season surge which is putting local emergency care under pressure.

Both Trusts have experienced particularly high numbers of attendances in their A&E and Emergency departments since Friday (28th) and this situation is continuing.



Dr Sean Fenwick, Director of Operations for the Trusts, said: “Since Christmas, we have seen a major increase in the number of people attending South Tyneside District Hospital and Sunderland Royal Hospital and we anticipate this pattern will continue in to the new year. Many of these patients do not need urgent treatment and we would appeal to people in our local communities to help ease the pressure by choosing the right NHS service.

“By working in partnership with the NHS, many people can stay well, prevent illnesses getting worse and get well again sooner, leaving our emergency teams free to treat patients with urgent and life-threatening illness and injury as quickly as possible.

“Self-care and visiting a pharmacist are options in the first instance for ailments which are common at this time of year, such as coughs and colds, upset stomachs and general aches and pains. If you really need to see a GP then they are providing more convenient appointment times for patients outside the standard working day by offering extended opening hours in the evenings and at weekends. If in doubt, the free NHS 111 number is available 24/7 for expert medical advice.”

For details of opening times for local GPs and pharmacists, go to

<http://urgentoremergency.co.uk/>

Use your NHS wisely

- If you have an urgent health need but are not sure if you need A&E, call NHS 111. You'll speak to highly trained advisors, supported by healthcare professionals, who will assess your symptoms and direct you to the best care. They can access extended hours GP appointments when your GP is full and can provide an appointment, saving you from a potentially lengthy wait.
- Don't wait until you get worse, see your local pharmacist first. Your local pharmacist can provide expert, confidential advice and treatment for minor illnesses, such as sore throats, coughs, colds, upset stomach and aches and pains. Many minor ailments can be treated at home with over-the-counter medicines and a first aid kit. Stock up on paracetamol, ibuprofen, rehydration salts, bandages, plasters, thermometer etc.
- Antibiotics don't work for viruses – they can only treat bacterial infections. Illnesses like diarrhoea, vomiting, sore throats and colds are usually caused by a virus and you should normally feel better over a few days to a week. Symptoms can be treated at home with over-the-counter medicines.
- The 'NHS child health' app has been developed by doctors, health visitors and pharmacists to help parents know what to do when their child is ill. You can download it from Google Play or Apple's App Store.
- A flu vaccine is available for free on the NHS for those in certain at risk groups for whom it can be more severe: anyone aged 65 and over; pregnant women; children and adults with an underlying health condition (particularly long-term heart or respiratory disease), and children and adults with weakened immune systems.
- If it is life-threatening or an emergency, call 999.

Ends

Photo caption: Dr Sean Fenwick, Director of Operations for South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts

Issued by **Kay Jordan**

For press enquiries on this release, contact **0191 404 1128** or email

kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk