

ACCIDENT EMERGENCY (A&E)

Please Avoid Unnecessary Use of A&E - Can our surgery help you?

Following recent changes to NHS funding arrangements, each attendance at A&E is now individually charged to the Primary Care Trust and ultimately to the patients' practice. Each attendance at A&E is charged at a standard tariff rate (between £68.24 and £139*), for more complex cases the higher charge is levied and costs of admission or outpatient follow-up are added to these costs.

(* Cost + Market Forces Factor for The Princess Alexandra Hospital).

When Should A&E be used?

Examples of when it is right and appropriate to attend A&E without delay are:

- Major injuries such as injuries from road traffic accidents.
- Falls from a considerable height.
- Major head injuries.
- Collapse.
- Severe breathing difficulty.
- Severe chest pain.
- Severe haemorrhage.
- Poisoning.
- Extensive burns.

When it is Inappropriate to Use A&E Services?

Unfortunately, many people attend A&E with very minor problems. This makes it difficult for A&E staff to deal with the volume of cases, involves delays for patients and incurs some considerable costs. The following are examples of minor problems for which A&E attendance is not appropriate. Generally, if the person is unwell, but alert and speaking without impaired consciousness or severe breathing difficulty, then they do not need to attend:

- Flu-like illnesses, coughs, earache, back ache.
- Sore throats.
- Minor breathlessness or wheezing.
- Abdominal pain (unless severe or associated with collapse).
- Urinary difficulties (unless completely unable to pass water).
- Vaginal bleeding (unless very heavy and associated with faintness).
- Rashes (unless it appears like spontaneous bleeding under the skin or the person appears very unwell).
- Backache.
- Diarrhoea and vomiting.
- Simple bites and stings.
- Social problems.

- Emergency contraception.
- Dental problems (except major trauma).

Such conditions can generally be safely managed by your GP, Nurse Practitioner, Practice Nurse and in some cases the individual themselves.

Alternatives to Attending A&E - General Practice

We are open between 8.00am and 6.30pm and provide comprehensive services. Urgent same day appointments are available for urgent problems. We also have Nurse Practitioners and Practice Nurses who can see and advise patients. We urge patients to avoid unnecessary use of A&E and to contact the practice in the first instance.

The **Out-of-Hours** service (contactable through the usual surgery telephone number after 6.30pm and before 8am), the **NHS Walk-In Centre** and **NHS Direct** can provide assistance for urgent medical problems or assistance with the treatment of minor illnesses and injuries. Most pharmacies can advise on minor illness and can provide medication to help you manage your condition yourself.