

NHS Lothian advice on keeping A&E for emergencies

NHS Lothian have advised on Friday that they are keen to keep the A&E departments at any of their hospitals free to deal with emergencies only.

This reflects that hospitals are already under increasing winter pressure. The health board wants to try and stop people going to A&E with minor health matters which could be dealt with by other health services such as your GP's surgery. Last year the NHS in Lothian treated more than 57,000 people in A&E.

Dr Tracey Gillies, Medical Director of NHS Lothian explains: "Now more than ever it's vital people access the right care in the right place. As the global pandemic continues, we need to avoid overcrowding in our hospitals which are extremely busy. People can get help more swiftly and safely from other health services."

NHS Lothian has signposted people to the range of services on offer and how to access urgent care. If people think they need A&E, but it is not life threatening then NHS Lothian advises they should now call NHS 24 on 111, day or night, to be directed to the right service or given an appointment to attend hospital if needed.

People can also call 111 if they have a minor injury, such as a sprain, strain or for a suspected broken arm or leg. If suitable they will arrange an appointment with Call MIA – NHS

Lothian's video consultation service – which facilitates an online assessment with a qualified nurse practitioner who can recommend treatment.

For online guidance on minor conditions and a directory of local health services visit NHS Inform. Or for advice about minor illnesses, such as sore throats, headaches or stomach upsets, contact a local community pharmacy first who can also recommend medicine if they think it is needed.

GP practices should continue to be contacted during normal opening hours for an appointment or over the phone advice on routine or urgent care.

If people have Covid-19 symptoms of either a new continuous cough, fever or change to sense of taste or smell, they should self-isolate immediately and order a test on the NHS inform website www.nhsinform.scot. It is essential people continue to self-isolate if they receive a positive test result and do not attend A&E or visit any health service unless directed.

Dr Tracey Gillies added: “We want to thank the public for continuing to follow guidance to help stop the spread of Coronavirus. It really does make a difference. But we do, nevertheless, still have a lot of patients in our hospitals with Covid and this adds to the winter pressures we are experiencing.”

“We want everyone to stay safe and well this winter, so we're asking people to make sure they know where to turn for help. There's lots of help available for both physical and mental illnesses and by using it you can help yourself and protect our NHS.”