

NHS Lothian warns of another Covid-19 wave

NHS Lothian have urged residents in the Edinburgh and Lothian area to think twice about visiting accident and emergency departments this winter amid warnings of another wave of Covid-19.

The health board urges those with minor injuries or illness to initially go to their local pharmacy, GP or call 111 to book an appointment in a minor injuries unit, rather than automatically going to the A and E, to ensure hospitals aren't overwhelmed over the coming months.

There were 356 new positive Coronavirus cases in Edinburgh in the week to 11 October, up slightly from 330 the week previous and a 22 per cent increase since the same time last month.

In Scotland, the number of people in hospital with the virus rose 12.6 per cent last week, with the Government expecting another wave of infections according to Holyrood's Health Secretary.

Humza Yousaf said the trend has been "relatively uncertain" over the last few weeks but added that "a bit of an uptick" has been noted.

He said: "We are expecting another Covid wave. That's why it's so important if you're eligible for vaccination, that you come forward and get yourself vaccinated – because we know that can help reduce your chances of being hospitalised and being

severely ill.”

The cabinet minister’s call to get a vaccination or booster was echoed by the region’s health board, which said the situation continues to be monitored closely in preparation for another rise in cases and hospitalisations this winter.

An NHS Lothian spokesperson said: “This winter’s vaccination programme, was launched on September 5, and is now well underway.

“We strongly encourage anyone who is eligible for the flu vaccination or Covid-19 winter booster to come forward. Getting vaccinated offers the best protection to you and those around you this winter.

“Contingency plans are in place and will continue to be monitored and revised, just as the bed configuration can flex to meet changes in hospital demand.

“We would also remind people in Lothian to make sure they get the “Right Care in the Right Place” by considering going to their local pharmacy or GP or by calling 111 to get an appointment with an expert in the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU), rather than automatically going to the Emergency Department.”

Meanwhile The City of Edinburgh Council said it stands “ready to act on any changes to the current national Covid guidance” in case restrictions or social distancing are reintroduced by the Government.

A council spokesperson said: “Our approach has always been to adhere to the latest Scottish Government advice and restrictions and to take steps to limit the spread of infections within any of our buildings.

“As we enter the colder months, we encourage everyone to keep themselves and those around them safe and healthy by attending Covid booster appointments and limiting contact with

other people when unwell.”

As well as encouraging all staff to get Covid boosters and flu vaccinations, the council is encouraging employees who are unwell to limit face to face contact with others.

by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter

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