Media information

Date: 21 April 2016

Advice for patients in Devon and Plymouth during industrial action

People in Devon and Plymouth are being urged to choose the right care service for their needs with the two-day junior doctors’ strike and Bank Holiday approaching.

As the industrial action and the long weekend fall within a few days of each other, both the local NHS – whose services are already under sustained high demand – and patients face a double challenge to be prepared.

For the first time, the industrial action will include A&E Departments like Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital, Derriford and North Devon District Hospital. Junior doctors will be withdrawing their labour with hospital consultants providing essential clinical cover.

The NHS is working hard to ensure that as few patients as possible are affected by the industrial action on Tuesday 26 and Wednesday 27 April, but some services will need to change and some are likely to be busier than usual.

Junior doctors will be striking from 8am to 5pm each day, including withdrawal of cover in A&E departments. Essential care will be provided by senior staff. You can help the NHS cope by choosing the right service and attending A&E only if it is essential.

Dr Tim Burke, a GP from North Devon and chair of NHS Northern, Eastern and Western Devon Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS NEW Devon CCG) said people can help ease pressure on the local NHS by choosing the right healthcare service for their needs.

“We're asking people to think before they attend the accident and emergency department and to consider whether another service might be more suitable.

“For example, we are encouraging people to consider using their local minor injuries unit, urgent care centre, or walk-in centre if they have an illness or injury that is not an emergency, instead of heading straight to A&E.

Key facts for NEW Devon CCG:

We have an overall budget of £1.1 billion
We serve a total population of 898,523
We cover a total area of 2,330 square miles
Our CCG chair is Dr Tim Burke and there are three locality chairs: North – Dr John Womersley East – Dr David Jenner West – Dr Paul Hardy
Our accountable officer is Rebecca Harriott

Healthy people, living healthy lives, in healthy communities
www.newdevonccg.nhs.uk

Contact the communications team on 01392 267 647 / 01769 575 153
or email us at d-ccg.communications@nhs.net
Minor injuries units (MIU), urgent care centres (UCC) and walk-in centres (WIC) are alternatives to attending emergency departments when an injury is not considered life threatening, but still requires urgent treatment.

Problems which can be treated at MIUs, UCCs and WICs include cuts, small burns and scalds, bites and stings, certain sprains and fractures, and in some cases, minor head injuries.

Other options include calling or visiting your GP, calling NHS 111, or calling or visiting a pharmacy.

Dr Burke added: “We are advising people to visit their local pharmacy at the first sign of illness.

“Pharmacists are highly trained professionals who are able and willing to help if you have a minor illness. You don’t need to have an appointment- you can just drop in and you can be out again in a few minutes with the medication and advice you need.”

Be prepared

If you have a long-term health condition or you look after someone else — including, for example, elderly people or young children — it’s important that you know what to do if you need the NHS during the industrial action.

Apart from your GP or hospital, there’s a range of other primary care services that can offer help, such as your pharmacist, dentist or optician. There are also specific services provided by midwives, health visitors and specialist nurses — check you know how to contact anyone you might need to talk to.

If you need regular medication for yourself or someone you care for, be sure to get the prescription from your GP and collect the medicine from your pharmacist.

If you are pregnant, make sure you know how to contact your midwifery team if you need help or advice. If you are near your due date, check arrangements with your maternity unit.

Planned treatment and outpatient appointments

If you have a planned operation, procedure or outpatient appointment on a day when industrial action is taking place, your hospital will contact you if the appointment needs to be rearranged. If you have not been contacted by the hospital, you should check their website for additional advice. If you are still unsure what to do, contact the hospital direct.

Patients already in hospital will continue to receive normal care, with senior staff covering for junior doctors. Inpatients will be told if any changes to their planned treatment are needed because of the strike.
GPs

Your GP practice will be open and working as normal during the industrial action. GPs, however, may experience greater demand than normal over this period, so contact them early if you need advice or an appointment.

Alternatives to A&E

If you become ill with a non-urgent condition and need advice, please consider alternative services. Pharmacists are trained to help people with minor illnesses and can advise on medicine that can be bought over the counter. Your nearest pharmacy can be found here: www.nhs.uk

For more urgent conditions that you believe you can't take care of yourself, you should contact your GP as usual, or call 111 if you are feeling unwell, unsure, or if you want health advice and guidance for non-emergency health needs, 24 hours a day, as well as help to find services. You can also visit www.nhs.uk

For minor injuries or illness (cuts, sprains, rashes and so forth) you could visit a walk-in centre, minor injuries unit or urgent care centre if the problem can't wait for a GP appointment. NHS minor injuries units (MIU), urgent care centres (UCC) and walk-in centres (WIC) - for treatment of minor illnesses or injuries, without an appointment. For details of your nearest MIU, visit www.nhs.uk. Bear in mind that these services may be busy during the strike.

A&E

If you need emergency care, Accident and Emergency departments will be open to deal with serious and life-threatening conditions. As is always the case, only those adults and children with genuine emergency needs should go to A&E. Emergencies include:

- major injuries, such as broken limbs or severe head injury
- loss of consciousness
- an acute confused state
- fits
- severe chest pain
- breathing difficulties
- severe bleeding that can't be stopped
- severe allergic reactions
- severe burns or scalds

More information and advice about the planned junior doctors’ strike and available services is available at www.nhs.uk/strike
Ends

For more information contact Keri Ross, Community Relations Manager, on 01392 267 680, or email keri.ross@nhs.net