




Your guide to getting the right NHS treatment in the right place



With the NHS these days, there are lots of choices. By making the right choice at the right time, you get the best possible treatment.

 **Keep this by your phone, on a notice board or with your key contact numbers.**

uncontrollably).  
If any of these symptoms are present, particularly loss of consciousness (even for a short period of time), you should go to the Accident and Emergency (A&E) department of your local hospital or call 999 for an ambulance.

**Meningitis**

Most people become very worried when they hear the word 'meningitis'. In fact, single cases are rare and clusters are even rarer. The illness develops very quickly. Specific symptoms of meningitis include one or more of the following:

- high temperature or fever;
- cold hands and feet when the rest of the body is burning;
- vomiting;
- severe headache;
- stiff neck;
- dislike of bright lights ;
- a bruising rash.

The rash usually starts as small red or purple pin pricks which then join to form red and purple blotches.

**If you think you or your child has meningitis, you should contact your doctor immediately or call 999 for an Ambulance.**

**Your important numbers**

NHS Direct .....0845 4647

Out of hours contact ...08452 262626

Your G.P. ....

Dentist .....

Pharmacist .....

.....

**Contact your doctor immediately if:**

- you know you have a heart problem and have a nitrate spray or tablets, but after using these your symptoms do not settle within five minutes.

**Call 999 for an Ambulance if:**

- the chest pain is severe and lasts for more than 10 minutes; and
- it spreads to your jaw or arm;
- you look pale or grey;
- you feel sick or cold;
- you sweat; or
- you become breathless. If you are in any doubt, contact your doctor

**Head Injury, Severe Symptoms**

A severe head injury, if not correctly treated, can cause serious damage to the brain. This type of head injury always requires urgent medical attention. The symptoms of a severe head injury can include the following.

- a lasting headache which worsens, or is still present over six hours following the injury.
- extreme difficulty in staying awake, or still being sleepy several hours after the injury.
- two or more bouts of vomiting.
- unconsciousness, either for a short or extended period of time.
- unequal pupil size.
- straw coloured or blood stained fluid coming from the nose or ears. This is cerebrospinal fluid which normally surrounds the brain.
- severe dizziness or loss of balance.
- confusion or strange behaviour.
- problems with memory.
- bleeding from the scalp that cannot be quickly stopped.
- not being able to use part of the body, such as weakness in an arm or leg.
- difficulty seeing or double vision.
- slurred speech
- unusual breathing patterns.
- ringing or deafness in one or both ears.
- having a seizure or fit (when your body suddenly moves

- the diarrhoea lasts more than a week (more than two days in a child)
- you pass little or no urine over 12 hours (six hours in babies) or
- you think you have picked up a stomach bug from overseas

Diarrhoea is unpleasant but rarely dangerous. Its most usual cause is a sudden change of diet; over-eating; over-drinking or it can follow travel to a foreign country. Many attacks are caused by virus or bacterial infection. Diarrhoea is often accompanied by a colicky (cramplike) pain in the tummy. It may also be preceded by vomiting.

**What you can do:**

- miss the next meal or two
- drink plenty of clear fluids (water or squash)
- take paracetamol for colic-like tummy pains
- take rehydration medicine available from your pharmacist

**Burns & Scalds**

**What you can do:**

- immediately run cold water on the burn and keep it there for 10 minutes (this will help to cool the burn and relieve the pain)
- do not remove clothing or anything else that sticks to the burn
- do not burst any blisters that form
- do not put on any creams

**Go to your nearest accident and emergency department if:**

- the burn is large, covers a joint, is not painful to touch, is on a child, or if there is sickness, shivering or a temperature; and
- cover the burn area with ordinary kitchen cling film

**Chest Pains**

Getting pains in the chest may be a symptom of a heart attack or it can be caused by other problems. Stabbing chest pain when you twist is usually your chest wall muscle and you can treat this with simple painkillers. Shooting pains which last a few seconds are usually not a cause of concern. If chest pain happens with a cough or fever, it can be a sign of pleurisy, in which case you should contact your doctor during normal surgery hours.

**Coughs**

**Contact your doctor if:**

- the coughing produces blood;
- if breathing is accompanied by a pain in the chest, or shortness of breath;
- if your cough lasts more than two weeks;
- you have a high temperature and a cough lasting more than five days;
- if a child with these symptoms is not swallowing.

**Call 999 for an Ambulance if:**

- you have severe breathing difficulties;
- you notice that your child's lips are bluish in colour.

**Sore Throats**

Most sore throats are caused by a viral infection which antibiotics cannot cure. The sore throat will usually disappear in a few days.

**What you can do:**

- to help relieve the pain on swallowing and if there is a temperature, take regular painkillers, such as paracetamol
- drink plenty of cold drinks.

**ASPIRIN MUST NOT BE GIVEN TO CHILDREN UNDER 12 YEARS OF AGE**

**Contact your doctor if:**

- you have severe problems swallowing
- you have severe breathing difficulties
- the problem lasts for more than three days
- you also have severe earache
- your temperature rises above 38.6°C or 101°F

**Diarrhoea**

**Contact your doctor if:**

- contact your doctors immediately if there is any blood with the diarrhoea
- a baby, or child with diarrhoea is drowsy or refuses to drink for a few hours
- you have a fever with the diarrhoea

**General**

It is sometimes possible to be ill even though you do not actually feel unwell. You should contact your doctor during normal surgery hours within ten days if you notice any of the following:

- feeling very tired for no apparent reason
- losing significant weight for no apparent reason
- feeling very thirsty a lot of the time for no apparent reason
- changes in colour, texture or size to a mole on your skin
- persistent indigestion or heartburn
- loss of blood when you cough, vomit, pass water or from your bowels
- changes to your voice - hoarseness or huskiness for no apparent reason

**Colds & Flu**

A cold usually begins gradually, it makes you feel generally unwell and achy, and then produces a runny or blocked nose. After a day or two your nose runs with a clear liquid which then becomes thick and yellow. You may also have a sore throat, sneezing, a cough and a slight temperature. Symptoms may last 7-14 days. A cold is a viral illness which cannot be treated with antibiotics.

**What you can do:**

- drink plenty of fluids
- alternate paracetamol and aspirin every 3 hours; this will ease your sore throat and muscle pains.
- keep warm and rest
- ask your pharmacist for advice on what over-the-counter medication would best treat your symptoms
- if you have children, ensure you have paracetamol suitable for children under 12 years and do not give children under 12 aspirin.

If you are taking other medicines, always check with your pharmacist. Many cold and flu products already contain paracetamol. Using several products together is very dangerous. If you already have cold or flu medicine in the house, check that it has not passed its sell-by date.

## Look after yourself *step* **1**

A well stocked medicine cabinet will help you treat many everyday illnesses at home.

Minor illnesses or accidents can happen at any time so its worth being prepared.

### What You Should Have in Your Medicine Cabinet

Essential items:

- Paracetamol for pain, fever and headaches
- Paracetamol liquid for children
- Oral rehydration sachets if you have sickness or diarrhoea especially babies and children
- Indigestion remedy (for example, antacids for heartburn, feeling bloated and trapped wind)
- Sunscreen - SPF15 or higher
- Tweezers and sharp scissors
- A thermometer
- A selection of plasters and dressings
- Antiseptic liquid or cream
- Disposable gloves

## Visit the chemist *step* **2**

If you are concerned, pharmacists (sometimes called chemists) can offer advice on medicines and how to take them. They can also offer advice on common complaints such as coughs, colds, aches and pains, and other health issues, such as healthy eating and giving up smoking.

You can talk to your pharmacist in confidence - even about the most personal symptoms. Most pharmacies now have a quiet area away from other customers where you can speak to the pharmacist in private.

So if you've got a cough, cold or think you've got the 'flu it's the best place to go. They can give you all the advice and medicines you need, without you necessarily having to go to your doctor for a prescription.

If you do not pay for prescriptions you will not have to pay for any medicines supplied through the Pharmacy First Scheme.

## NHS Direct *step* **3**

NHS Direct can help with a 24 hour advice and health information service at any time, especially if:

- you are ill at night
- other services are not open, or
- you find it difficult to get to another service.

It is staffed by nurses and professional advisors, providing confidential information on:

- what to do if you or a family member feels ill
- particular health conditions
- local health services (such as doctors, dentists or out of hours pharmacies), and
- self-help or support organisations.

You can call NHS Direct any time, day or night on

# 0845 46 47

## Contact your practice *step* **4**

### Your GP Surgery

Of course, sometimes we all need to go to the doctors. Your local GP surgery provides a range of services including:

- general medical advice and treatment prescriptions
- referral to a specialist or a hospital
- immunisations/tests

In recent years, many more nurses have been trained to give advice, take tests and diagnose and treat illness that used only to be dealt with by doctors. These nurses are very highly skilled health professionals.

### Out of Hours

There is a local G.P. out of normal surgery hours service. This service is only for urgent medical problems that cannot wait to be treated until normal surgery hours.

Out of hours contact number:

# 08452 262626

## Visit an Urgent Care Centre *step* **5**

This Unit can be accessed directly by people who have sustained a minor injury, as the name suggests - it is not an Accident and Emergency Department or an out of hours GP surgery. The Unit is staffed by Emergency Nurse Practitioners, who see, treat and discharge patients and are able to request X rays if necessary.

This service is not for General Practice problems. As a general rule if you can transport yourself then visit your nearest urgent care centre.

### Urgent Care Centre locations:

Burnley General Hospital (J12, M65)  
Royal Blackburn Hospital (J5, M65)

Open 24 hours a day, all year round.

## Visit the Emergency Department *step* **6**

You should only go to A&E or call **999** if immediate emergency care is needed.

A&E departments tell us that many people who go to A&E don't need to - wasting valuable time and resources needed for real emergencies. It is often very obvious if someone is seriously ill and needs immediate emergency care. The emergency services in East Lancashire are located at Royal Blackburn Hospital signposted off Junction 5 of the M65. An emergency is 'a critical or lifethreatening situation' and includes things like:

- Unconsciousness
- Losing a lot of blood
- Difficulty in breathing
- Severe chest pain
- Suspected broken bones

The UK probably has the best emergency services in the world. Please help us to help you by:

**'Getting the right treatment - in the right place'**

Self Care

Pharmacists

NHS Direct

GP

Urgent Care

Accident & Emergency