

Urgent health advice for families – January 2015

Emergency health services in Hertfordshire are extremely busy at the moment. Hospital A&E departments are being stretched by the number of patients arriving at their doors, as is the ambulance service.

The situation is so serious that health bosses and the most senior doctors in the area have asked schools to pass on this important message.

The Accident and Emergency departments at our hospitals only have the capacity to treat people who have serious, life-threatening or dangerous conditions. Ambulances should only be called in genuine emergencies. If you use emergency services incorrectly you are risking the lives of others and may not get the best treatment for your child's illness.

If your child needs urgent medical help but it is not a 999 emergency, then dial NHS 111 free from any mobile or landline for fast advice on where to go in your local area.

Otherwise make an appointment with your GP or practice nurse. Extra appointments, including some in the evenings and at the weekends, have been made available in many GP practices this winter. And don't forget your local pharmacist. They are experts in minor illnesses like coughs, colds, tummy aches and temperatures and can advise you on low-cost medicines to relieve your child's symptoms or advise you on another service that can help.

Visit www.nhs.uk for trusted advice and information on how to look after yourself and your family. It covers thousands of illnesses and conditions and has specific advice for parents and children including serious symptoms that you should look out for.



**when it's less
urgent than 999**