

PRESS RELEASE

21 December 2011

Choose Well at Christmas

The NHS in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin is encouraging people to be prepared and choose their health services wisely over the Christmas and New Year period.

Both NHS Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire County PCT are reminding people to ensure they have enough medication to see them through the two bank holiday weekends. Remember your GP practice may require 48hours notice for prescription requests.

During the winter months the NHS sees an increase in the number of people needing medical advice. If people are normally well, it can be confusing to know which NHS service is best.

Both NHS Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire County PCT would like to remind people that there is 24/7 GP advice available in the county, to patients who need urgent medical advice. A&E and 999 should only be used for life threatening or serious illnesses and injuries. If a condition is not serious enough for A&E or 999, then people can call their GP practice for urgent advice.

When a GP Practice is closed, there is still GP advice available through the local Out Of Hours GP service, Shropdoc. A GP can help advise you on your condition, and whether you need an urgent appointment, or whether you can use one of the local health services including the Minor Injury Units or pharmacies.

Dr Bill Gowans, Vice Chair of the Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "It is often the way that people find themselves needing urgent medical advice- out of hours or at bank holidays; however they are unsure which NHS service to use. This year we are reminding people that you can get 24/7 GP advice all year round including at Christmas. If your GP practice is closed you can contact Shropdoc the local out of hours service.

"Many people head to A&E or dial 999 because they don't know where else to go, however we are reminding people that these services should only be used for life threatening or serious injuries and illnesses. If your condition is not serious enough for A&E or 999- use our GP services. Don't wait at A&E unless you really need to."

Dr Mike Innes, Chair of the Telford and Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "We are encouraging people to be prepared this Christmas, and take steps to enjoy the Christmas season. Remember if you need regular medication ensure you have enough to last over the two bank holiday weekends- don't delay, put your prescription in as soon as you can. We would like to remind people that Shropdoc should not be used for repeat prescriptions. Ensure your medicine cabinet is well stocked for when the shops are closed.

"We are all looking forward to having a good time this Christmas, however we encourage you to think ahead and be safe. No one wants to spend Christmas in hospital, so please drink responsibly.

"As well as 24/7 GP advice, don't forget you can get health advice at your local pharmacies, many of which will be open over Christmas when other services may be closed. Pharmacies can help give you advice on coughs, colds as well as emergency contraception."

Be prepared this Christmas- keep the phone number for your GP practice handy in your mobile or near your home phone.

For information on pharmacy opening hours over Christmas and where to go for health advice visit www.telford.nhs.uk or www.shropshire.nhs.uk

When a GP practice is closed Shropdoc can be contacted on 08444 06 88 88

- Ends -

For more information, contact:

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Notes to editors

1. For details of Pharmacy opening times and out of hours services, visit: www.telford.nhs.uk or www.shropshire.nhs.uk
2. You can find a symptom checker and information about local NHS services at www.nhs.uk
3. NHS Direct is available 24 hours a day at www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk or on **0845 46 47**