



## NHS South East Essex and NHS South West Essex

### Health bosses urge South Essex residents to Choose Well

People across South Essex are being encouraged to use the NHS wisely over the winter period to help ensure they're getting the best treatment in the right place at the right time.

The NHS is a complicated system and often people find it difficult to know what the best course of action is. A&E may not always be the best place to go. With attendances at Southend hospital high and calls to 999 increasing, we need to make sure they are only used for the most urgent, life-threatening cases. If you go to A&E or call 999 when your health doesn't need urgent attention, you are potentially delaying treatment for someone who does.

Here, we're making it easier for people to Choose Well:

- **Self-care:** Winter always brings more coughs, colds and sore throats. If you start to have symptoms of flu or a heavy cold, stay at home, keep warm and take plenty of non-alcoholic drinks. If your GP writes to you recommending you have the flu vaccination, this is because they think that if you do catch flu you'll be at higher risk of serious complications. Take them up on their recommendation and make an appointment.
- **NHS Direct:** If you're unsure of your symptoms and want expert advice, call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47. The service is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and the call is free. You will be assessed and advised by a qualified nurse on the best course of action to take and whether or not you need to seek professional help.
- **Pharmacy:** Pharmacies offer more than prescriptions. They can advise on bugs and viruses, coughs and colds, aches and pains, tummy upsets and allergies. Most pharmacists offer private rooms if you want to speak confidentially and you don't need an appointment. To find your nearest pharmacist, send a free text with the word 'Pharmacy' to 64746 or call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on freephone 0800 587 9159.
- **GP surgery:** Your GP surgery offers more than GP appointments. They have practice nurses that you can see too. If you feel you need medical advice, an examination, or you have an illness or injury that requires a prescription, your GP surgery is best. If you're not registered at a GP surgery and want to know your nearest one, send a free text with the word 'Doctor' to 64746 or call PALS on 0800 587 9159.

- Walk-in health centres: You can see a GP or nurse at St Luke's Health Centre in Southend - even if you're not registered - between 8am and 8pm, 365 days a year. St Luke's Health Centre, located behind Cumberlege Intermediate Care Centre, Pantile Avenue, Southend on Sea, SS2 4BD, 01702 611505. For your nearest Walk-in Centre text the word 'Walk' to 64746.
- A&E or 999: A&E and 999 should only be used for serious illness or injuries considered to be critical or life threatening such as chest pains, severe blood loss or unconsciousness.

Tom Abell, Director of Commissioning for the South Essex PCT Cluster, says:  
"Changes in weather and temperatures often mean otherwise healthy people fall ill during the winter months. If you're not familiar with the NHS services on offer, because you are normally healthy, it's often hard to know what to do for the best. We're asking people to take the time to choose the right service for their health issue. If you're at all unsure, log onto [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk).

"We're asking for the public's help this winter to make sure the emergency services are there for those that desperately need them."

