

Press Release

For immediate release:

21th December 2011

NHS Says “Be Prepared”

With a flurry of bank holidays on the horizon as the UK gears-up to celebrate the festive season; NHS Tameside and Glossop are advising people to stock-up on medicine cabinet essentials, and reminding those receiving repeat prescriptions, to collect their medication as soon as possible, and not wait until they have almost run out.

Although there will be pharmacies open throughout Tameside and Glossop during the Christmas and New Year period (including all of the bank holidays), your regular pharmacy may not be open as usual. Details of pharmacies opening hours over the festive period can be found on www.tamesideandglossop.nhs.uk. You can also text ‘pharmacy’ to 64746 to receive three free texts with the name, address and telephone number of your three nearest chemists.

Dr John Doldon, GP at Staveleigh Medical Centre and Prescribing Lead for NHS Tameside and Glossop said “Making sure you stock up on some essentials that can help you and your family to cope with common complaints such as colds, coughs, stomach upsets, flu and earache, and collecting any repeat prescriptions sooner rather than later will mean that you are better prepared. It will also mean that A&E, 999 and GP services have more time to deal with serious and life-threatening conditions, such as heart-attacks, strokes, breathing problems and serious accidents.”

Seasonal flu and colds are on the increase throughout the UK, and the North West region is seeing a rise in the numbers attending its emergency department, urgent care centres, and calling GP out of hours with symptoms. The numbers of calls to GP out of hour’s services from people who mainly have cold symptoms mean that people who are seriously ill and need treatment may struggle to get through on the phone.

Some basic advice that everyone can use includes:

- Talk to your pharmacist; they will be able to advise what medication you should take for common minor illnesses, and whether or not you need to see a doctor;
- use paracetamol if you have a temperature caused by coughs, cold and flu;
- paracetamol can also be used for pain relief for complaints such as earache, stomach ache, sore throats, general aches and sprains;
- anti-diarrhoea and re-hydration mixtures for adults if they have an upset stomach, and;
- get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids.

John Doldon advised, “There is a lot that people can do to self-care for common complaints, without needing to take medical advice. The majority of people will begin to feel better within three to four days. Your local high-street chemist can give you advice on the best medicines to take for you and your family so it is worth talking to them about medicine cabinet essentials. Antibiotics have no effect on conditions caused by viruses such as coughs, colds, flu or stomach upsets”.

“Always read the instructions for any medicines and do not take more than the recommended dose. If your symptoms suddenly deteriorate or fail to improve over a week contact your GP.”

NHS organisations across the North West are backing the Choose Well campaign that aims to reduce the number of people who go to A&E or dial 999 with common complaints such as coughs, colds.

John Doldon added: “We need people to ask themselves, are they seriously ill or do they simply have an uncomfortable but common complaint.”

For more information about self-care options for common complaints, go to www.nhs.uk

Ends

For further information on the above please contact:

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Notes to Editors:

1. NHS hospitals and ambulance services across our region are facing increasing demands on their services. Over 3.5 million people went to A&E departments in the North West last year. The cost of providing A&E services went up last year by 19 per cent to £3.78 million.
2. We need to make sure that A&E services are free to deal with patients who have serious and life-threatening illnesses, such as heart attacks, strokes and serious injuries.
3. NHS teams across the North West are backing the Choose Well campaign. Choose Well aims to give people information so that they know where to go to in the first instance, to get fast, expert advice when needed, and how to help themselves if they have a common illness or ailment – and help ease the pressure on A&E and 999 services at the same time.
4. If you or someone in your family has back pain, sore throat, flu, cough or cold, stomach upset or sports injury, there are a number of ways you can look after yourself in the first instance.
5. Your symptoms should ease over a few days if you use some over-the-counter medicines that are available from your local chemist. Your high street chemist can give you expert advice. Always read the instructions carefully and make sure you don't take more than the recommended dose.
6. If your symptoms suddenly deteriorate or continue to get worse over a number of days, get an appointment to see your GP.