

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

*For immediate release*

Friday 3 January

# Help us ease NHS pressures this winter

**The NHS in the Black Country is asking local people to think which service they need this winter to help ease pressures.**

With the onset of colder temperatures, there is typically an increase in health issues such as respiratory conditions, colds, flu, and injuries from slips and falls. This surge, combined with existing winter pressures on hospital services, means that more people are likely to need urgent care.

To ensure that emergency departments are available for those who need them most, local people are being reminded to choose the appropriate NHS service for their need.

People who need medical help that isn't an emergency should contact NHS 111 in the first instance by visiting [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk) or by calling 111.

NHS 111 can help direct people to the most appropriate local health service if they aren't sure where to go – this could include an out of hours GP, a pharmacy, a local NHS walk-in centre, or a hospital accident & emergency (A&E) department.

People are also being reminded of the vital line of support that is available in their local pharmacy. Patients can now get treatment for seven common conditions directly from their local pharmacy, without the need to visit a GP.

The Pharmacy First service enables pharmacists to offer advice to patients and supply NHS medicines (including antibiotics), where clinically appropriate, for sinusitis, sore throat, earache, infected insect bite, impetigo, shingles and uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs) in women.

If you have symptoms that suggest you may have one of these conditions, you can walk into a pharmacy and be offered a consultation with the pharmacist. Should the pharmacy team be unable to help, you will be directed to your GP surgery or A&E as appropriate



Dr Ananta Dave, Chief Medical Officer for NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board, said:  
“January is a challenging time for the NHS, with many people seeking help for seasonal illnesses, minor injuries and other health concerns.

“The cold and icy weather conditions forecast for the next few days also pose additional risks for individuals with long-term health conditions as well as those who are more vulnerable to the cold such as the elderly and young children, increasing demand for services.

“The NHS is asking local people to think which service they may need and to use the most appropriate services for their needs over the coming weeks.

“By taking simple steps like using pharmacies for minor ailments, getting vaccinated against respiratory illnesses such as flu and COVID-19 if you’re eligible, and using NHS 111 for advice, you can help us ensure that our A&E departments are there for those who need urgent and emergency care the most.”

A&E and 999 should only be used for serious and life-threatening conditions.

**ENDS**

#### Notes to editors:

- For media enquiries please email [comms.blackcountry@nhs.net](mailto:comms.blackcountry@nhs.net)
- Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) is a statutory NHS organisation responsible for developing a plan for meeting the health needs of 1.2 million people in the Black Country.
- The ICB was established on 1 July 2022 when the former Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) was abolished.
- The ICB manages the NHS budget for the area and arranges for the provision of health services locally. It has responsibility for primary medical services (GPs) from 1 July 2022, and will take responsibility for dental, optometry and pharmacy, plus some specialised services, from April 2023.
- The ICB is part of the Black Country Integrated Care System (ICS), known as Healthier Futures, working to bring health and social care services closer together for the good of our communities. We support the ICS’s vision for a healthier place with healthier people and healthier futures. You can [find out more about the ICS and our collective priorities by visiting the Black Country ICS website.](#)
- For the latest local NHS news and health advice, visit our website or follow us on social media:
  - Website: [www.blackcountry.icb.nhs.uk](http://www.blackcountry.icb.nhs.uk)
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