

WINTER WEATHER HEALTH TIPS

6th January 2010

NHS Winter Weather Update at 10:30hrs on 6th January 2010

Switchboard at St. Mary's Hospital

Our switchboard is receiving a high level of calls at present. Please use the numbers listed below for advice. Please assume your hospital appointment is not happening today unless you are advised otherwise by the NHS (see below).

Emergency Department and Beacon Health Centre at St. Mary's

Both the Emergency Department and Beacon Health Centre at St. Mary's are coping well and dealing with emergencies and urgent medical enquires as they come in. For advice please telephone NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 or visit www.nhs.uk or out of hours ring the Island Health Line on 0845 6031 007.

Hospital and Medical Appointments on Wednesday 6th January

All outpatients appointments at St. Mary's have been cancelled and any appointments missed will be rebooked. The same applies to other clinic appointments in the Community. NHS Isle of Wight is advising patients with hospital or other medical appointments to only venture out in snow and icy conditions if it is safe for them to do so.

Sheila Paul, Chief Operating Officer, says: "We don't want Islanders trying to attend hospital or other health appointments and becoming casualties of the cold weather. For those patients who have appointments at St. Mary's or in health clinics then please do not worry – your appointment will be rebooked. If you are being collected by the Patient Transport Service then we will telephone you to discuss the position."

GP Practices and Medical Centre

The Phlebotomy Clinic this morning at Ventnor Medical Centre, Albert Street, Ventnor is cancelled. All GP practices are currently open but operating on skeleton staffing. If you don't need to visit your GP then stay warm and safe indoors. If it's easier to get to your local pharmacy then they may be able to provide you with advice.

District Nursing Visits

District Nurses will be making essential visits only. These include essential injections, syringe drivers, catheters. Patients requiring an essential visit will be seen at some point today - District Nurses are travelling on foot. District Nursing arrangements will be reviewed daily. Anyone concerned can contact the District Nursing Team on 552456.

NHS Staff

With essential services to run, if possible all NHS staff regardless of where they work should try to get in providing it is possible and safe to do so. Staff who are unable to get to work must phone their manager to discuss arrangements. Staff are being redeployed as necessary to assist with essential services. The nursery on the St. Mary's site is open. Sheila Paul, Chief Operating Officer says: "The response of our staff and volunteers has

WINTER WEATHER HEALTH TIPS

been magnificent. They have worked tirelessly throughout the night to ensure that essential services are maintained.”

Ambulance Crews Remain at Full Stretch

Chris Smith, Head of the Isle of Wight Ambulance Service comments: “All our emergency ambulances and crews remain fully committed and will be as long as the snow is with us. It is vitally important that the 999 ambulance service is only called in the event of life threatening injury. The snow on the Island’s roads and the difficulties caused by the conditions for other motorists means that it is taking much longer than usual for us to respond to calls. Please think twice before calling 999 and where possible use NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 for telephone advice or log on to the NHS Choices website www.nhs.uk.”

PCT Board Meeting

The PCT Board Meeting this morning has been cancelled.

'Choose Well' during the cold weather - General Advice

With the prospect of snowfall on the Island this week and the cold snap continuing throughout January, Islanders are reminded of the dangers of venturing out in the freezing weather. The cold weather is proving hazardous for people going about their daily routines and older people in particular are asked to take special care as roads, pavements, driveways and garden paths remain very slippery.

Since mid December NHS services on the Island have treated an exceptionally high number of people with injuries sustained as a result of slips, trips or falls on icy surfaces. The Emergency Department at St. Mary’s Hospital saw approximately 150 people on 21 December which equates to an average day in the height of summer and the Diagnostic Imaging Team x-rayed 114 patients compared to a daily average of between 40-55 and are still seeing on average 70 patients per day.

On the same day the Island’s Ambulance Service responded to 60 emergency calls in the space of 4 hours compared to an average of 40 calls for a normal 24hour period and are continuing to respond to a high level of emergency calls as a result of the cold and ice which is putting significant pressure on the service.

Diane Adams, Diagnostic Imaging Manager at St. Mary’s Hospital said: “We are continuing to see patients who have fallen victim to the icy conditions and require x-rays for broken bones and fractures. It is so easy to fall and break a bone. We would advise people to only go out if they really need to and to wear footwear which provides a good grip if they have to venture out.”

Some practical steps which Islanders can take to minimise the risks to themselves during periods of cold weather:

- Have regular hot drinks and at least one hot meal a day – if possible, eating regularly helps to keep energy levels up during winter

WINTER WEATHER HEALTH TIPS

- Wear several light layers of warm clothes
- Keep as active as possible
- Remember to wrap up warm if you need to go outside on cold days

Winter is a busy time for hospitals and GP surgeries. To avoid any unnecessary delays in patients getting the treatment they need, anyone feeling unwell is encouraged to 'Choose Well' this winter. NHS Isle of Wight is encouraging people to choose the right NHS service if they need expert health advice or treatment.

- Self care - for the treatment of minor illnesses by keeping a well stocked medicine cabinet
- NHS Direct - for round the clock, confidential health advice. Tel: 0845 4647 or log on to www.nhs.uk
- Pharmacists - for expert advice on common illnesses and the best medicines to treat them
- GPs - providing a range of services by appointment, including medical advice, examinations and prescriptions for illnesses.
- The Beacon Health Centre - for treatment of minor injuries such as cuts, stings, muscle and joint injuries without an appointment – 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week.

Accident & Emergency (A&E) or 999 - for serious and life-threatening emergencies. If someone is seriously ill and in need of immediate emergency care, call 999 and ask for the ambulance service.

Notes for Editors

For further information contact the NHS Isle of Wight communications team on 552003.

Further information about health services can be found at www.iow.nhs.uk or www.nhs.uk.