

**We are here for you
this winter.**

**Useful information about
your local ambulance service.**

nwas.nhs.uk



We want to remind our public that we're here for your urgent medical needs this winter. We have a number of services that can support and assist you when you need us the most. As well as guidance around what each of our services are for and when to use them. We understand the challenges you may be facing over the next few months but getting you the right care at the right time is important to us.

In the event of a serious or life threatening emergency, always dial 999.

This booklet will help you to know what to do when it's not an emergency.

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Calling 999

When to call 999

Examples of a serious emergency:

- cardiac arrest
- chest pain
- breathing difficulties
- loss of consciousness
- suspected stroke
- suspected heart attack
- confused state
- fits that aren't stopping
- severe bleeding
- severe allergic reactions
- burns and scalds
- fall from height
- serious head injury
- stabbing
- shooting
- serious road traffic incidents

Once you're connected to a call handler, you'll be asked a series of questions to establish what's happened:

- Is the patient breathing?
- What's the address of the emergency?
- What phone number are you calling from?
- What has happened?

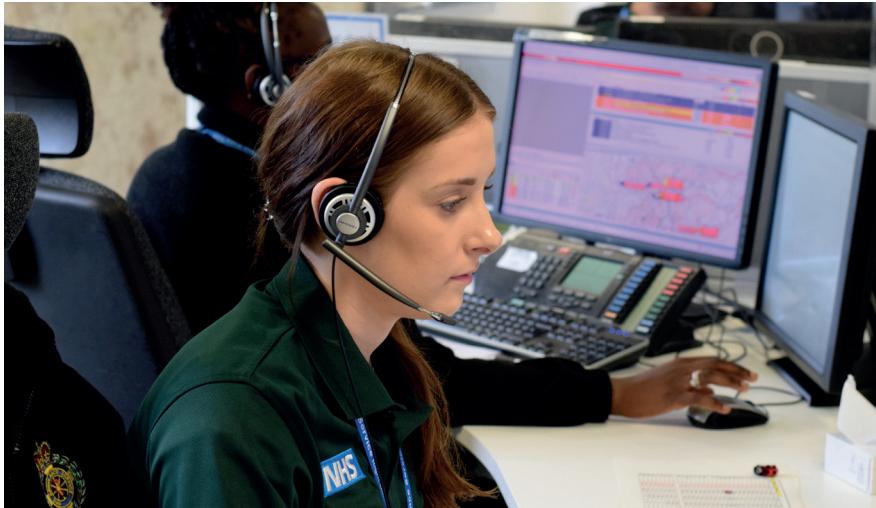
This will allow the operator to determine the most appropriate response as quickly as possible.

Dialling 999 does not necessarily mean an ambulance will be dispatched. The call will be prioritised depending on the medical issue. An ambulance will be sent if it's a life-threatening emergency.

Response units that could be dispatched include:

- an emergency ambulance
- a response car
- a community first responder
- a combination of the above

Calling 999



If you call 999 for a less serious medical issue, there are three ways we may be able to help you, once your medical need has been assessed by our call handler.

1 Call back

We have clinical experts who may call you back to discuss your condition further. They may then refer you to another service which is more appropriate for your medical concern. If we think you need to go to hospital, but you don't need any medical help immediately and are safe to travel, you may be asked to make your own way.

2 Hospital

If the clinician feels you need to go to hospital or an urgent treatment centre, they'll make sure you travel in the safest way. If you need care, treatment or monitoring on the journey, you'll go by ambulance. If it's safe for you to travel without this, they may suggest going with a family member, friend, or by taxi.

Calling 999

3 Ambulance assessment

We will send an ambulance if you need our help. The nature of your medical condition will determine how quickly we get to you.

Hospital may not be the best place to get you the help you need but the ambulance crew will assess you and make sure you get the right care.

Myth buster

Arriving by ambulance does not automatically get you treatment any quicker. The hospital will triage you as if you have arrived independently.



Alternatives to 999

If you want medical advice, but it is not an emergency, please try one of the below:

1 Pharmacy

Pharmacists are experts in medicines who can help you with minor health concerns. As qualified healthcare professionals, they can offer clinical advice and over-the-counter medicines for a range of minor illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats, tummy trouble and aches and pains.

If you run out of prescription medicine and do not have a prescription, you can get an emergency supply from a pharmacy without a prescription. Take identification, an old prescription or the medicine's packaging with you, if you have it.

2 111.nhs.uk

Use the symptom checker, which can give you the right advice for your concerns. If you are unable to access 111 online, you can call 111 (waiting times will vary).

In some cases, 111 will be able to book an appointment for you at urgent treatment centres, GP surgeries, pharmacies, emergency dental services and walk-in clinics.

If you are advised by 111 to attend hospital, you may be given a time slot for you to arrive at an A&E department. However, please remember this is a guide only. A&E departments can get busy very quickly so they may not be able to accommodate you immediately.

3 GP

GP practices are available to assist you, whether this is face to face, a telephone call or a video consultation.

Please contact your practice by telephone or online.

4 Urgent treatment centres

Urgent treatment centres provide fast, same-day care for minor injuries and illnesses that are not life-threatening but still require medical attention. They are staffed by a range of healthcare professionals, including nurses, paramedics, and GPs. The centres can assess and treat a variety of conditions, such as suspected broken bones, sprains, cuts, rashes, burns, minor head injuries, and ear, nose or throat problems. They can also make appropriate onward referrals if needed.

Our ask of you

We understand accessing other services may be challenging at times but we need to be available to respond to life-threatening emergency calls when they come in. Please don't call 999 as a result of having difficulties accessing alternative care, unless your symptoms become life threatening.

If you have contacted us and we have categorised the call as low priority, you may wait for a considerable time for a face to face response. We know this can be frustrating but we have to send an ambulance to the most serious medical emergencies first.

We always advise patients to call back if their condition worsens at any point. Please avoid calling back to ask how long we will be, this could prevent another caller getting through.

If you have called an ambulance but no longer need one, it is vital you call us back to let us know.



Advice

1 Get advice if you feel unwell

It is important to get medical advice or help as soon as you start to feel unwell, especially if you are over 65 or have an existing medical condition. Don't wait until it becomes an emergency, contact your pharmacist, GP or NHS 111 for advice.

2 Stay protected with vaccines

Getting vaccinated, whether for the flu, measles, COVID-19, or other illnesses, is one of the best ways to protect yourself and those around you. If you are advised or offered a vaccine, it's important to take it to help prevent the spread of disease and keep our communities healthy.

Useful contact numbers

Samaritans - 116 123 (24 hour)

Whatever you're going through, you can call Samaritans at any time for free. They offer a safe place for you to talk in your own way about whatever is getting to you.
samaritans.org

Mind - 0300 123 3393 (Mon - Fri, 9am-6pm)

Information and support about mental illness.
mind.org.uk

Age UK Advice Line - 0800 678 1602

A leading charity for older people providing help, information and advice. Lines are open 8am-7pm, 365 days a year.

The Silver Line - 0800 470 8090

A free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people. Available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.
thesilverline.org.uk

Hub of Hope - The Hub of Hope is the UK's largest and most comprehensive directory of community mental health services, so you can find help when you need it, wherever you are.

hubofhope.co.uk