

NHS

**North West
Ambulance Service**
NHS Trust



**WE ARE HERE FOR YOU
THIS WINTER.**

**USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT
YOUR LOCAL AMBULANCE SERVICE.**

nwas.nhs.uk



We know our communities will be facing additional pressures this winter as we all feel the impact of the cost of living crisis throughout the region. During this time, we want to remind our public that we are here for your urgent medical needs. We have a number of services that can support and assist you when you need us the most, and 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.

When you dial 999, an ambulance may not always be immediately dispatched. The call will be carefully prioritised based on the nature of the patient's condition. However, if it's a life-threatening emergency, an ambulance will be sent promptly.

Response units that could be dispatched include:

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





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 emergency call handler.

1 CALL BACK

We have specialist practitioners who may call you back to discuss your condition further. They may then refer you to another service that 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 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 clinicians will assess you and make sure you get the right care.

2 HOSPITAL

If you do need to go to hospital, we may transport you to either the nearest local emergency department or specialist hospital, depending on your condition. Our ambulance clinician may recommend you make your own way, get a relative to take you or book you a taxi to take you to an urgent treatment centre or emergency department.

MYTH BUSTER

Arriving by ambulance does not mean you will get seen any quicker. The hospital will triage patients depending on their condition, regardless of how they arrive.



ALTERNATIVES TO 999.

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

1 GP APPOINTMENT

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.

2 111 ONLINE - 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 or pharmacies.

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

3 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.

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 get worse and you need emergency help.

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 GET A FLU, COVID-19 AND BOOSTER VACCINE

Flu will often get better on its own, but it can make some people seriously ill. It's important to get the flu vaccine if you're advised to or are offered one.

The flu vaccine is safe and effective. It's offered every year by the NHS to help protect people at risk of flu and its complications.

Also having the COVID-19 vaccines and booster is the best way to protect yourself and others. Research has shown the vaccines help:

- reduce your risk of getting seriously ill or dying from COVID-19
- reduce your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19
- protect against COVID-19 variants

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](https://www.samaritans.org)

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

Information and support about mental illness.

[mind.org.uk](https://www.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](https://www.thesilverline.org.uk)

If you would like this information in an alternative language or format, such as easy-read or large print, please contact our Communications Team: communications@nwas.nhs.uk