

Surgery News

I promised last month that I would let you have opening hours over Christmas and the New Year for the various sources of medical advice and assistance that might help you to make it into 2012 without having to endure a long wait in A&E at Colchester General. The staff there are fantastic, but I'm absolutely sure that they'd be delighted **not** to see you over the festive season. I dare say you probably have better things to do than queuing for attention amongst the seasonal drunks and people with genuinely life-threatening problems.

If what you need is some good, common-sense medical advice, this is always available by telephoning NHS Direct on 0845 46 47. The service is available 24 hours every day, even when the surgery is open. These days, you can even start your assessment procedure on-line at www.nhs.uk/nhsdirect and then go on to speak to one of the expert nurses.

If you have suffered a minor injury, including things like cuts and lacerations as well as possible fractures or dislocations, your first option should be the Minor Injuries Unit at either Clacton Hospital (open from 9.00am until 9.00pm every day) or Fryatt Hospital, Harwich (open from 9.00am until 5.00pm every day). They have x-ray facilities on site. No appointment is necessary.

If you need attention because you are ill (but able to travel), or because you have a minor injury which you are sure won't need an x-ray, then between 7.00am and 10.00pm each day you could use the North Colchester Health Centre in the Primary Care Building on Turner Road, Colchester.

These three options are not just for Christmas by the way, they are available every day of the year.

Next, if you need urgent medical attention when the surgery is shut and are too ill to travel to get it, the Harmoni Out of Ours Service will be available. All you have to do is ring the surgery telephone number and you will automatically be transferred to them. Please note that lack of transport does not qualify you for a visit. It is up to you to get yourself to Harmoni unless you are genuinely too ill to leave the house.

The option of last resort is A&E at Colchester. They will be rushed off their feet dealing with cases which are genuinely life-threatening or too serious for the alternative sources of care, so please avoid using them if you possibly can. If you have to use A&E, that doesn't mean that you call an ambulance either. If you are fit to get yourself there or for someone else to drive you, this will certainly be the quickest option and it will leave the hard-pressed ambulance service to look after those who are in desperate need of them. If you are unfortunate enough to come into this last category of course, you need to ring 999.

As we head rapidly towards the end of 2011, how about a few suggestions for New Year Resolutions? Have you noticed that most resolutions centre around "self" and what you can do to improve your own life? See if you can spot what the following rather different resolutions have in common:

- I'm going to become a blood donor
- I'll sign up on the bone marrow donor register
- I'll put my name on the organ donor list and carry a donor card

The answer is that all of them would cost you absolutely nothing, would take very little of your time and might well save someone else's life one day. To keep any of them, you don't have to give up doing anything addictive or enjoyable. You wouldn't have to exercise self-control or buy special clothing and equipment. All you have to do initially is find out how to go about it – we can tell you here at the surgery – and then just do it. I promise you that keeping any one of these resolutions would give you a really good feeling about yourself with minimum effort. A pretty good way to start 2012 I reckon.

Finally for this month, on behalf of everyone here at the surgery, may I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy, healthy 2012. We'll be looking forward to seeing all of you at some stage during the new year – just not too often though!

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