

## CASUALTY – THE REALITY!

Casualty units or, to give them their correct title, Accident and Emergency (A&E) Units, are familiar to most of us, even if we have never needed to use their services. They have long been a favoured setting for television dramas. The 'Casualty' series on BBC1 has been running since 1986 and (so far!) almost 800 episodes have been transmitted, but older readers may also remember 'Emergency Ward 10', one of Britain's earliest soaps, a twice-weekly 'must see' broadcast on ITV between 1957 and 1967. Many other dramas have used a similar setting over the years, and if a consistent characteristic can be found in all of these, it must surely be that A&E is a very busy place, with apparently endless queues of walking wounded waiting for attention. Anyone who has been obliged to spend time in a working A&E unit will confirm that – at least in this respect – the fictional dramas accurately portray reality.

A&E Units are equipped with a great deal of expensive equipment, and are staffed by highly-trained medical professionals, as they must be if they are to provide the best possible care and treatment to patients in life-threatening situations. Unfortunately, a sizeable proportion of available A&E resources is expended in attending to patients who really do not need to be there. Most minor ailments and injuries can be treated much more cost-effectively – but just as professionally – by your local NHS Walk-in Centre. Opening hours vary, but in broad terms these Centres are open from early morning until mid-evening. Our nearest Centres are at Blaydon (on Shibdon Road, near the Swalwell roundabout) and Gateshead (at Bensham Hospital; follow the signs from the traffic lights at the junction of Bensham Road and Victoria Road); for many patients these locations will be more convenient than the A&E Units at the Royal Victoria Infirmary or the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

So, next time you need medical attention which can't be provided at the surgery, but the circumstances don't amount to an emergency, please consider whether you really need to attend an A&E Unit. Use a Walk-in Centre if you can, and leave the A&E staff to devote their expertise and equipment to people who really need it – one of these days, that might include you!

### REVIEW APPOINTMENTS

If the Doctor asks you to make a review appointment (for example, if you are asked to come back in six weeks) please call at Reception before leaving, so that we can ensure that your appointment is reserved at the appropriate time.

### PASSPORT SIGNING

As the peak holiday season is almost upon us, we'd like to remind patients that if they wish to have their passport application form countersigned by a GP, the form should be left at Reception. If the Doctor is willing to sign it a fee will be payable, as this service is not available through the NHS. Other qualified people are eligible to countersign these forms: a full list is available from Reception on request.

### SURGERY CLOSURE

The Surgery will be closed for staff training from 12.30.pm. on the following date:

**Thursday 7 July 2011**

In an emergency, please contact the Out of Hours Service on **08450 568060** or if necessary call **999**.

### EVENING SURGERIES

We are sorry that because of staffing difficulties we have had to suspend our evening surgeries for the immediate future.

We are keeping the situation under review and we'll do our best to keep you up to date with any further developments.

## ONLINE SERVICES

If you'd like to register for online services, so that you can book GP appointments or order repeat prescriptions on line, you need to apply in person at Reception. You'll be asked to sign a form confirming that you have received your password. If you are unable to leave your home, you can ask us for an authorisation form, which you need to complete and sign so that someone else can call on your behalf. These arrangements are necessary in order to ensure that your records remain confidential.

## SLIMMING ON REFERRAL

If you have been referred under the above programme and wish to continue for a second period of 12 weeks, you do not need to make an appointment with a GP. Simply call at Reception with a letter from the class detailing your weight loss. We'll deal with the letter and post out your authority to contact the class about your additional entitlement of vouchers.

This referral scheme is currently available in the Gateshead area; your GP can authorize a free referral to either Slimming World or Weight Watchers, provided that you have a Body Mass Index greater than 28. You can check your body mass on the machine in the waiting room – ask for a free token at Reception. However, you are not eligible for the scheme if you are already a paying member of either of these clubs or have attended one of the clubs within the past three months. If you'd like to know more, just ask at Reception.

## CLINICAL SAMPLES

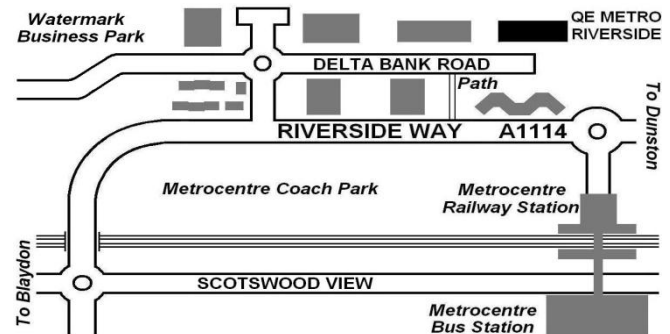
When handing in any sample (urine, stool, etc) at the surgery, be sure to check that all the necessary details are completed on the bottle before you hand it over. We need your name and date of birth, and also the time and date the sample was taken. If we don't have all of these details the sample may be rejected, in which case we'd need to ask you to provide another.

## A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME ...

... would smell as sweet, or so Shakespeare tells us in *Romeo and Juliet*. Something similar seems to be true of the humble sick-note, which was abolished last year and re-born as a 'Statement of Fitness for Work'. You still need a Statement if you are unwell and absent from work for more than 7 consecutive calendar days. However, the new statement allows for greater flexibility and better communication between your doctor and your employer, especially as regards the option of a phased return to work.

## QE METRO RIVERSIDE SERVICE

Since 2009, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital has offered most (though not quite all) outpatient services and facilities through its Metro Riverside outstation, located in the Riverside Business Park between the Metrocentre Railway Station and the River Tyne. If you are referred as an outpatient and choose the QE, you will usually be able to decide whether to be seen at the main hospital or at Riverside. If you would prefer Riverside, check with Reception before you leave the surgery to confirm that the option is available for the treatment or examination you need.



As you can see from the sketch map above, Riverside is close to the Metrocentre – barely five minutes' walk from the Metrocentre Bus Interchange. Car parking is available on site

## HEADSETS

Our Receptionists are now using headsets linked to our phone system. It may take a while for everyone to become used to the new technology, so please allow a little latitude in the meantime. In particular, please don't be alarmed by receptionists who seem to be muttering to themselves, or who fail to greet you as soon as you arrive – they are neither losing their sanity nor rudely ignoring you, but simply trying to deal with a telephone call. Thanks in advance for your patience!

## GOT A MINUTE TO SPARE?

Don't waste it – visit [www.nhs.uk/choices](http://www.nhs.uk/choices); it's chock full of information about services provided by the NHS and detail of the choices YOU can make about where and how you are treated.

## GRANGE ROAD HEALTH TIP No.5

Don't forget that exercise is good for you in all sorts of ways. How much exercise you can handle depends upon your general level of fitness, but the ideal is 30 minutes of moderately intensive exercise five times a week. The 30 minutes can be made up of separate 10-minute bursts. You'll need to do rather more if you're exercising to lose weight.