

Media Release – For immediate publication

New online resource shows Emergency Department alternatives for non-urgent illnesses

15 September 2017 – Brisbane South PHN has launched a new resource to encourage patients with non-urgent ailments to see their GP instead of visiting the Emergency Department (ED).

The [Emergency Choices website](#) explains how the ED is not always the best option for non-urgent conditions. The resource lists many free alternatives that are available, including the Healthdirect Symptom Checker, 13 HEALTH telephone service, after hours services and your local GP.

Brisbane South PHN Board Chair, Dr Ian Williams, said there were many options for receiving treatment of non-urgent injuries and illnesses.

“Patients seeking urgent medical care for minor ailments will find it is easier and usually a lot quicker to call an after-hours GP, instead of waiting for hours at busy hospitals,” Dr Williams said.

“Most GPs will have a link to an after-hours service and the Emergency Department is not always your best option for after-hours care. The hospital ED is intended for patients needing life-saving treatment, so please avoid it if your condition could be better managed by your GP.”

Dr Williams said the Emergency Choices website uses a colour-coded scale of emergency alternatives:

- **BLUE:** Getting worried? Get free customised medical information online using Health Direct symptom-checker.
- **GREY:** Need to talk now. Call 13 HEALTH to get medical advice from a registered nurse 24/7.
- **AMBER:** Need to see a doctor. Call your GP or an after-hours GP service to see a doctor 24/7.
- **RED:** It’s an emergency. Serious illness? Accident? Suspected heart attack or stroke? Go to a hospital ED or call 000 for an ambulance.

“The campaign is not designed to discourage people with genuine concerns from attending ED, just to think about alternatives before rushing in,” he said.

Data provided by Metro South Health for the 2016-17 financial year shows many people are still going to the ED for minor injuries or illnesses.

Metro South Health Chief Executive Dr Stephen Ayre said “there were more than 95,500 category four and five presentations at Metro South Health hospitals (Princess Alexandra, QEII, Redland, Logan and Beaudesert) last year”.

“Presentations included treatment for non-urgent conditions such as ankle and knee sprains/strain, cuts to a finger, viral infections and wound care. These are conditions that could be treated by a GP, pharmacist or physiotherapist,” he said.

Princess Alexandra Hospital Director of Emergency Dr Phillip Kay said in non-urgent situations, patients can easily access timely and qualified health advice without going to the ED.

“Our emergency departments are incredibly busy and we need to be able to quickly respond to life-threatening emergencies. If your injury or illness is severe, call 000 or head straight to emergency,” Dr Kay said.

“If it is not an emergency, visit your GP or call 13HEALTH.”

The Emergency Department Choices campaign is supported by Metro South Health.

To visit the campaign website, go to <http://emergencychoices.org.au>

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