

## **A&E – how can you help the staff to help you?**

So you're thinking about attending Hillingdon Accident & Emergency (A&E) unit, with an accident or emergency problem?

The aim of this article is to give you some information that may help you.

It has been noted that more people have visited A&E - 10% increase each year over the last three years. For example, in November 2003 6,447 patients attended A&E, but in November 2004 7,109 attended.

So it is important that before you come to the A&E department you take a moment to think is this the best place for you to come for your treatment.

Clearly if you have had an accident or emergency then you should come to A&E immediately for treatment – by ambulance if necessary.

However if you think your problem is less urgent then it may be more appropriate to ring NHS Direct for advice or contact your GP.

### **Some general information that may help you:**

- If you are taking medicines, either prescribed by a doctor, or 'alternative' ones, it helps if you carry a written copy of this information at all times. Name of medicine, dose of medicine, how many times a day it is taken, is the kind of thing we need to know.
- If you see an A&E doctor, at times they may need to send you back to your GP. This is because referral to a speciality doctor as an out-patient, not as an emergency, cannot normally be made from A&E.

### **Accidents.**

If you have a wound, if possible, rinse it under the tap and cover with a clean material – paper kitchen towel is absorbent and disposable. If there is excessive bleeding apply firm pressure. If the bleeding is uncontrollable – for example, soaking through six sheets of paper kitchen towel, and making you feel faint due to loss of blood [not just from looking at it!] then dial 999.

Staff will also ask if your 'tetanus' immunity is up to date - bringing this information will help everyone. So it is best to find out about it now, before you have an accident.

- ❑ Upper limb injuries - please remove any rings immediately as the finger may swell.
- ❑ Lower limb injuries - wear loose fitting clothes to aid easy examination of the leg.

In both cases apply an ice pack until the affected part feels numb [taking care not to burn the skin] - as it reduces swelling and pain. Take paracetamol or other over the counter painkillers- unless it is unsafe for you to do so. Follow instructions on the packet/bottle.

### **Emergencies.**

If there is a possibility that you may need to see a specialist medical, surgical, or gynaecologist/obstetric (women's problems) doctor, it probably would be best to see your own doctor (GP) - they will make the appropriate referral directly. This avoids you having to see an A&E doctor. GPs offer a service, or an alternative, even when the surgery is closed – ring the surgery number.

However, if your GP sends you to A&E to see a speciality doctor there may be a wait, especially if several patients have also been referred and arrived at a similar time. We would like to see everyone immediately, but sometimes it is not possible.