

111 First Frequently Asked Questions

When should I contact NHS 111?

If you or a family member has an urgent, but not life-threatening, health problem or think you need to go to A&E, you should contact NHS 111 first. A doctor, nurse, paramedic or trained advisor will direct you to the right help quickly and safely.

How can I contact NHS 111?

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To get help from NHS 111, you can:

- go to 111.nhs.uk (for people aged 5 and over only).
- call 111 for free from a landline or mobile phone (all ages).

What are the benefits of calling 111 first?

By contacting NHS 111 first if you think you need to attend A&E for an urgent, but not serious or life-threatening medical need, you will:

- speak with a healthcare professional earlier, and get the right treatment first time
- avoid waiting for a long time in A&E waiting rooms.

In London, NHS 111 is already able to book appointments for patients at the majority of Urgent Treatment Centres and GPs.

NHS 111 can now also book appointments at any A&E in England for patients that need them. If you are assessed as needing to go to A&E, you will be advised exactly where to go and when.

These changes will help the NHS to minimise the risk of coronavirus spreading by allowing more space for social distancing in A&E waiting rooms.

How can NHS 111 First help those who struggle with communication or hearing?

All NHS 111 providers follow the Accessible Information Standard, meaning that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss get information they can understand and any communication support they need, e.g., British Sign Language.

For those who have difficulties communicating or hearing, they can:

- tell the call handler that they need an interpreter
- call 18001 111 on a text phone or using the Next Generation Text (NGT) Lite app on their smartphone, tablet or computer; or
- use the NHS 111 British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter service if they're deaf or have hearing loss and want to use the phone service.

How can NHS 111 First help those who do not have English as their first language?

NHS 111 in north central London (covering Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington) uses [LanguageLine](#), a phone translation service for people who do not have English as their first language. LanguageLine enables you to communicate in over 200 languages 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, connecting you to a professionally qualified interpreter using any phone in under a minute.

What if a patient turns up to an emergency department or A&E without a booked slot?

If you do make your own way to an emergency department/A&Es or urgent treatment centre (UTC), you will still receive treatment. Patients needing emergency treatment will be prioritised, however those whose conditions are not as urgent may need to wait elsewhere or return for a later appointment.

Using 111 first will help you get quicker, safer care in the right environment and help the NHS to minimise the risk of the coronavirus spreading.

When should people call 999 or what if they are unsure if their symptoms are serious or life-threatening?

If you or a family member has a serious or life-threatening health need, it is still important to call 999 immediately.

If you're not sure what to do, you should call NHS 111 and a fully trained health advisor can put you straight through to a healthcare professional. They can also send an ambulance if needed.

Will NHS 111 be able to cope with the extra calls?

The NHS has expanded the 111 service significantly to deal with any increased pressure as we go into the winter period. This means that more doctors, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics and trained health advisors than ever before will be available to respond to Londoners' health needs.

Around 2,500 NHS 111 staff look after Londoners 24/7 365 days of the year – and this number will be expanded to over 3,000, including 166 more doctors, nurses, pharmacists and paramedics.

Who will I speak to at NHS 111?

More than two in three people who call NHS 111 speak to a nurse, doctor, pharmacist or paramedic.

Healthcare professionals oversee NHS 111 calls, providing guidance and taking over the call if a patient has more complex needs. NHS 111 healthcare professionals also have access to individual care plans, mental health crisis plans and lists of shielded patients, to help give you the best care possible.

All NHS 111 service GPs have video conferencing facilities available to support their clinical consultations.

How long will it take to ring NHS 111, and will I need to repeat information over and over again?

Last year, NHS 111 dealt with over 3 million calls, with the average call being resolved in eight minutes.

Sometimes NHS 111 will need to ring the patient back, and the average call back time is around nine minutes.

NHS 111 clinicians can see patients' own GP records to support their clinical decision making in the NHS 111 call.

NHS 111 repeat callers are automatically identified meaning information about the original call is available to NHS 111 which prevents the need to repeat information.

Isn't NHS 111 just an information line?

No – NHS 111 is much more than information line.

NHS 111 helps to get the patient to the right service for their clinical needs first time.

NHS 111 can make direct appointments at GP surgeries and Urgent Treatment Centres - as well as send an ambulance should the patient's condition be serious or life-threatening.

People contacting NHS 111 who are assessed as needing to receive urgent or emergency care, will be advised where they need to go for treatment and a timeslot can be booked for them. This will drastically reduce the time typically spent queuing in waiting rooms.

How are call handlers trained?

NHS 111 health advisors undertake a rigorous training programme lasting at least 10 weeks. What they say and the questions they ask have been developed by the country's leading doctors to ensure patients get the right care. A team of healthcare professionals, including nurses, doctors, paramedics and pharmacists also oversees NHS 111 calls, providing guidance and taking over the call if a patient has more complex needs.

Is NHS 111 only for physical health problems?

No. Callers in mental health crisis who call 111 are assessed with the same care as callers with physical symptoms. Once assessed, callers will be transferred to local mental health crisis services to ensure they receive timely specialist mental health support.

Can I call with a dental issue?

Yes. Callers with urgent dental issues are quickly routed to a dental nurse service

who can advise on pain management and if required booked into an emergency dental appointment.

Who was involved in deciding what changes needed to be made in London?

London's approach has been developed by a range of specialists including hospital consultants, GPs, nurses, paramedics pharmacists, social workers, mental health specialists, NHS 111 teams in the capital, using local knowledge and expertise. This approach is similar to that being used across the rest of the country, but we have also spoken with a number of people from across the capital to get their views and considered their feedback as part of the design process, ensuring the approach works for Londoners.