

SOUTHLEA GROUP



PRACTICE

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OUT OF HOURS MEDICAL CARE

In the UK there are two main ways of accessing medical services out of normal working hours:

The Emergency Department (also known as Accident and Emergency, or Casualty) – The nearest being Frimley Park Hospital, Portsmouth Road, Frimley, Camberley, Surrey, GU16 7UJ.

Out of Hours GP Centres – Our practice uses Frimley Primary Care Services (Also based at Frimley Park) – **Telephone No 0118 936 5649**

The Role of the Emergency Department

The emergency department is there to see patients with serious, **life threatening**, illness and injury.

If you develop chest pain, become very short of breath or have a serious accident then this is the right place to go.

If you injure yourself and think that you need immediate treatment this can also be provided in a minor injuries unit, either at Frimley (where it is part of A and E) or at another hospital/walk in centre.

The minor injuries service is not there to see patients who have old injuries, for these you should see your normal GP.

Out of Hours GP

If you do not fall into the above categories (for instance have a cough, cold or earache) and have a problem you would normally see your GP for, you should contact the Out Of Hours GP – there are many reasons why they are better set up to deal with GP problems and will provide you with a better service:

Time – Unlike A and E the Out of Hours service tries to give you an approximate appointment time, this means that you will be seen more quickly than you would probably be in A and E, where waiting times can be many hours.

Over the phone advice – It may be that your problem can be dealt with by one of the highly experienced GPs, and trained nurses, over the telephone without the need to visit; they might feel you need a simple prescription or some helpful advice and this would save you the wait in A and E.

Access to hospital services – If the GP that sees you decided you need to be admitted and treated in hospital they are able to refer you to a specialty in the hospital, just like A and E can. This means that a long A and E wait can be avoided as you can be seen directly by a specialist doctor.

Continuity of care – As mentioned earlier A and E's role is to ensure you do not have a life threatening condition that needs immediate treatment in hospital. They may perform tests to make sure this is not the case and then discharge you, without a diagnosis, to go and see your GP. As they are GPs the out of hours service have a greater understanding of caring for illnesses in the community and will not only start treatment on the day but will also liaise with your own GP to ensure you are correctly followed up.

When you are really ill – There may come a time when you are really ill and need to use the Emergency Department to get treatment for a life threatening condition. By going to A and E for less serious matter this could mean someone in this position has to wait longer for treatment with potentially serious consequences for them.

Cost – Whilst your health is our main priority the NHS always has to watch its spending. A and E costs a significant amount more than the Out of Hours GP service. A trip to A and E costs the local health authority (which you pay for through your taxes) a minimum of £100 compared to visiting the Out of Hours Centre which costs £50.