

Save time this year by making the most of the NHS

Make sure you have a healthy 2024 by using the right NHS service when you have an urgent medical problem.

The NHS in Kent and Medway is encouraging people to think about what health support they need and choose wisely by using NHS 111, online and by phone, and www.stopthinkchoose.co.uk.

Stop Think Choose helps patients make an informed choice about where to go by listing the range of available options, including details of Kent and Medway pharmacies, urgent treatment centres (UTCs) and minor injury units (MIUs).

Kate Langford, Chief Medical Officer at NHS Kent and Medway, said: "The NHS is here for you. Please help us by using the most appropriate NHS service so you will be seen and treated quicker. This also means hospitals and ambulances can focus on patients who need emergency help.

"Use NHS 111 online or by phone or visit www.stopthinkchoose.co.uk for top tips on staying healthy, along with a list of pharmacies and urgent treatment centres.

"Winter in particular can be a busy time for the NHS so it's even more important to go to the right place for your need."

Looking after yourself

Most minor illnesses will get better without the need to visit a doctor and can be treated at home. You can help ease the pressure on the NHS by making sure your medicine cabinet is fully stocked with the basic essentials, such as paracetamol, ibuprofen, cold remedies, indigestion treatment and antihistamine, and by ordering repeat prescriptions in good time so that you don't run out.

Pharmacies

Pharmacies can offer free advice on a variety of health issues without an appointment. There are more than 300 pharmacies across the county with many open late into the evening and at weekends. They can offer a wealth of health support and should be the first port of call for common illnesses, such as coughs and colds.



Urgent treatment centres

There are urgent treatment centres (UTCs) across Kent and Medway that are open every day of the year. These centres are equipped to diagnose and deal with many of the most common ailments people go to A&E for and are open a minimum of 12 hours, usually from 8am to 8pm.