

What am I waiting for?

Emergency department Patient Information

Welcome to the Emergency Department (ED) where we see and treat approximately 230 patients a day ranging from minor injuries and illnesses, through to those who are seriously unwell or injured. This leaflet will give you some insight into what to expect when you attend and how your journey through our department will look.

What is front door streaming?

On arrival you will have seen our front door streaming nurse who will have asked your reasons for coming to the department and taken some initial details. At this point they will have placed you in the best place for your care, which may be in the main department or in the Urgent Treatment Centre.

What is the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC)?

The Urgent Treatment Centre sees patients with minor injuries and illnesses. There are three main routes:

Via ED

Via an NHS 111 booked appointment

Via NHS Think 111 - non booked appointment

ED minors: you will be triaged on arrival in the department after being streamed from the ED front door and a decision will be made on whether you need to wait to be seen, with an estimated time being given, or you may be asked to return to a booked appointment either later that day, or even the next day. In either case, initial investigations can be started at this stage and whichever route you take, you will be seen by an advanced practitioner, physiotherapist, or doctor.

NHS 111 booked appointments: you may have contacted NHS 111 and had an appointment made for you to see one of our GPs or primary care practitioners - this is a booked appointment managed separately to the main ED services.

NHS Think 111 First: you may have contacted NHS 111 and been advised to attend the ED and front door streaming may have redirected you to the UTC. Please be aware that this is an arrival time only and not an appointment time and after assessment in the department you will be seen in order of clinical priority (how urgent your medical need is).

Due to multiple services working within the UTC, it may appear that people are being seen before you - this may be because they are there for a different service i.e. the booked appointment, or as an emergency, where care will be based on clinical priority.

What happens at triage?

If you have been asked to sit in our main ED waiting room, you will be seen by our triage nurse. The nurse will ask further details about why you are in the department and decide what immediate care is required and where within the department your needs will be best dealt with, which could include staying in the waiting room, or direct transfer into one of the areas within the ED. If it is felt appropriate, you may still be directed to our UTC, an appointment made to see a GP, or a booked appointment made to return.

Nursing staff are always around to help. Although it may not always seem it, staff are constantly overseeing all patients in the waiting room and are trained to make quick visual assessments. If you feel your needs are changing, or you require any assistance, please do not hesitate to speak with reception or the nursing team.

Will I have any tests or investigations?

Observations, and any further investigations that may help with your diagnosis (blood test, heart monitoring, x-rays), may be started at triage or once you get into your bed space. Some are standard practice based on your presenting condition and others are as a result of the information you give to the triage nurse, or the nurse in the bed space area. Depending on your condition, monitoring may be more often and is always based on clinical need (your medical situation). Investigations are taken early to make things more efficient, meaning you may have them taken before you are seen by the clinician, so the results are back and ready for when they see you. Some take time to come back - 1.5-2 hours for some bloods for example, and so having them early reduces waiting time.

When will I be seen by a clinician and have my needs assessed?

Your wait time to be seen by a clinician will be based upon your condition, which does mean sometimes you may wait longer than others. We have lots of different people working as clinicians in the department, which helps to speed up processes and reduces waiting time for you as much as possible.

Will I receive treatments and a diagnosis?

Once seen by a clinician, treatments and possibly further investigations may be requested, or you may need to be seen by a more senior member of the team, or by a different team of doctors who specialise in what you are presenting with, before a decision and treatment plan can be made.

What will happen after I have been seen and had all the tests?

Based on all the above, the clinician will decide on your outcome of care. This may involve some treatment being given before you can be discharged, or may result in the need for you to be referred on as an outpatient, or admitted to continue care.

If you require admission, a bed will be requested with the relevant ward - you may have to wait until a bed on the ward is available, during this time all staff here in the ED will continue to provide the care, support and treatment you require.

If you have any queries while you are waiting, then please ask the receptionist, the triage nurse or any of the staff working in the department.

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The Royal Bournemouth Hospital, Castle Lane East, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH7 7DW
Poole Hospital, Longfleet Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2JB

Author: **Samantha Audus** Date: **August 2026** Version: **Two** Review date: **August 2029** Ref: **059/23**

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