USEFUL CONTACTS

**NHS South of Tyne and Wear**
**www.sotw.nhs.uk**
This website gives details of local health services, health news and information for people living in Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

**NHS Choices**
**www.nhs.uk**
NHS Choices is a comprehensive information service providing up-to-date advice on a wide variety of health issues. It also allows you to find NHS services in your area.

**The Site**
**www.thesite.org**
The site offers advice and information on a wide range of issues, such as sex and relationships, health, the law, money and travel.

You can find out about things to do in your area by visiting your local council’s website:

- **Gateshead**  
  **www.gateshead.gov.uk**
- **South Tyneside**  
  **www.southtyneside.gov.uk**
- **Sunderland**  
  **www.sunderland.gov.uk**

This information can be made available in another format or language on request. Please telephone the communications team on 0191 529 7121.
This little book of health has been created for adults aged 16-24 living in Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

You’ll find useful advice and information inside about how to keep your mind and body healthy, and where to find help if you have a problem. It gives helpful websites, telephone lines and directions to local health services.

Whether you have a health concern or are worried about a friend, or are simply curious about general health, we hope that you will find this guide useful.
Drinking in moderation can be an enjoyable and, usually, harmless part of life, but regularly drinking too much can damage your health.

Nobody looks good with a hangover. But over time, drinking too much can cause more permanent damage to your skin, hair and nails, and can cause you to gain weight.

When drunk, you’re more likely to take risks with your safety, increasing your chances of having an accident, experiencing a sexual assault or getting into a fight. The healthy choice in the short term is to take just a little extra care to protect yourself and your friends when you are going out drinking. Know your own limits and make sure you know how to get home safely. If you are going out, you can reduce your chances of getting too drunk and having a hangover by:

- Having a meal that includes carbohydrates (such as pasta or rice) or fats before you go out;
- Drinking water or non-fizzy soft drinks after each alcoholic drink;
- Drinking a pint of water before you go to bed.

‘Hair of the dog’ (drinking more alcohol) doesn’t help a hangover. It’s better to drink lots of plain soft drinks to rehydrate your body and ease the symptoms. You should allow 48 hours to pass before you drink any more alcohol, to give your body time to recover.

Driving the Next Day

On the morning after a night of drinking, you could still be over the safe limit to drive.

Even though you may feel okay, if you are stopped and breathalised and found to be over the limit, you could face a prison sentence and/or a fine, as well as being disqualified from driving for at least 12 months.

You can work out how long it will take for you to be safe to drive after a night out by using the drinks calculator at:

MORNING-AFTER

morning-after.org.uk

Alcohol and Sex

When you drink, you may take risks you wouldn’t normally take. If you have sex, there’s more chance that you won’t use a condom properly or at all, putting you at greater risk of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) or an unwanted pregnancy.

There is also a risk of having your drink spiked with ‘date rape’ drugs. To reduce this risk:

Don’t accept drinks from strangers;
Don’t leave your drink unattended;
If your drink has been moved, looks like it has been topped up, or tastes funny, don’t risk it - get another one.

For more information visit:

drinkaware.co.uk
If you already smoke, and would like to quit, then don’t try to do it with willpower alone. Ask your GP about the options available or contact your local NHS Stop Smoking Service. This service is free to use and you are up to four times more likely to quit with their support than by trying to quit on your own. Your local services can be contacted on the following numbers:

Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland - 0800 531 6317 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm)

Alternatively, you can phone the National Smokefree Helpline on 0800 022 4332 (7am-11pm) or visit:

smokefree.nhs.uk

Get your family and friends to support you, or if they smoke too, encourage them to quit with you.

Within a year of stopping, the risk of heart attack falls to about half that of someone who continues to smoke, and within 10 years the risk of lung cancer falls to half that of a smoker.

Most young people don’t smoke, but there can be a lot of pressure for you to start, either from your friends, or sometimes even to “fit in” with your family.

Whether you smoke already, or are a non-smoker tempted to take up the habit, consider the down side.

- Your skin will age more quickly because chemicals in cigarettes restrict blood flow to your skin. Smokers have more wrinkled and saggy faces by the time they’re in their mid-20s;
- Smoking stains your teeth, turning them yellow;
- Smoking decreases your lung capacity, making you more out of breath especially during exercise;
- The younger you start smoking, the greater your risk of developing cancer later in life;
- Smokers, on average, will die 10 years younger than their non-smoking peers;
- One third of young people who try cigarettes just to see what they are like become addicts;
- A ten-a-day habit costs £1,000 a year, think about what else you could buy with that – driving lessons, your first car, a holiday with friends.

Smoking is associated with more than 50 different diseases and disorders, many of which are fatal.

Smoking
One of the biggest risks of regularly taking one or more drugs is that you can develop a drug addiction, which can have a disastrous effect on your work or studies, as well as your health.

Mixing more than one drug or taking drugs with alcohol significantly increases your risk of overdose – this includes ‘legal highs’ and solvents. When you take cocaine or crack with alcohol, a third, more toxic, drug called cocaethylene can form in your liver. This significantly increases the risk of heart attack or sudden death.

If you would like further advice or information about specific drugs and their risks, call:

**talktofrank.com**

0800 77 66 00    talktofrank.com

Friendly, confidential drugs advice
Legal Highs
Legal highs are substances created to get around the drug laws. This is usually done by modifying the chemical structure of existing drugs or by creating a new drug.

Legal highs can produce effects similar to illicit drugs like ecstasy or cocaine but they can be sold legally. They are made up of an ever changing set of chemical compounds, some of which have never been used in humans before. You have no way of knowing what you’re taking and the effects can be unpredictable, both in the short-term and the long-term.

The modifications are made purely in the interests of dodging the law - not to make the substances any safer for consumption. Legal highs share all of the same risks as illegal drugs and can cause paranoia, fits and even a coma or death. Be wary of those legal highs marketed as being ‘natural’ or plant-based as these also have risks.

Solvents
You can die instantly from misusing drugs that you can buy over the counter. This includes things like aerosols, glues and other solvents.

Drugs and the Law
If you’re caught with drugs, you may be charged with possessing an illegal substance, whether it’s yours or not. You can be fined or receive a prison sentence of up to seven years.

The punishments can be much more severe if you are found to be dealing in drugs or supplying them – even if it’s to friends or no money changes hands.

Help in an Emergency
Look out for danger signs in yourself or other people who have taken drugs – like unconsciousness, overheating, dizziness, sickness, sudden tiredness, headaches, cramps and aching arms and legs

Phone 999 in this situation and an ambulance will be sent to take you or your friend to hospital for medical help, which could save their life.

Getting Help
If you are worried that you or a friend has a problem with drugs, there are a wide range of services that can help. You can receive confidential advice and be assessed to find out what type of treatment is best for you at your GP surgery. Many drug treatment services accept self-referrals, so you may not need to be referred by your GP. The contact details for local drug services who can offer confidential help and advice are:

Gateshead
Get SMART (for people aged 18 and under): 0800 694 0277
www.getsmartgateshead.com
Drug services for people aged 18 and over: 0800 328 6728

South Tyneside
The Matrix (for people aged 18 and under): 0800 328 1898
www.ypmatrix.org
Drug services for people aged 18 and over: 0191 456 9999

Sunderland
YDAP (for people aged 18 and under): 0191 566 3159
www.yourhealthsunderland.com/ypdap
Drug services for people aged 18 and over: 0191 567 2678
EXERCISE
We are all busy, and it can seem difficult to find time for regular exercise, but it’s easier to fit in than you might think and it’s worth it for the benefits.

Doing 30 minutes of moderate to intense physical activity at least five days a week will help to keep you at a healthy weight and lower your risk of major illnesses later in life. It can also help you to lose weight, especially when combined with a healthy, balanced diet.

If you’re looking to make new friends and would like to do something as part of a group, then you can find out what sports clubs are available in your area by visiting:

nhs.uk/change4life

If you are a student, you could also ask about the sports facilities available on campus.

If you feel you’re not the ‘sporty’ type or your school PE lessons put you off exercise, now’s your chance to try a new activity, like dancing, martial arts, aerobics or badminton.

There are other ways of exercising too, such as jogging or running (and they are free!), or even some simple everyday activities:

- An easy start is to walk more - a 15-minute walk can be a nice break to clear your head after a busy day at work or whilst you are revising for exams, and it will also burn calories;
- If you are heading out, why not cycle or walk part, if not all, of your journey? Get off the bus or metro one stop before your final destination;
- Get fit with your friends. Go for a bike ride together, kick a football around in the park or even share the cost of renting or buying an exercise DVD and have a fun night in;
- If you’re going out in the evening, dance!
- You could also try exercising first thing in the morning. You may find it wakes you up and gives you energy for the day. Try swimming, a gentle jog or doing some stretching exercises.
23-year-old Sarah Lamb, from Plains Farm, Sunderland, has lost weight through getting fit and active with the help of the Sunderland Exercise and Weight Management Programme.

After having her two children, aged three years and eight months, Sarah decided it was time to lose the weight she had gained while pregnant. Sarah asked her GP if there was any help available and he referred her onto the Sunderland Exercise and Weight Management Programme.

Sarah attends group activities with her mum such as a Circuit Class, and goes to the gym three times a week at the Silksworth Community Pool, Tennis and Wellness Centre.

“I found PE lessons at school to be quite boring, and I struggled to find the motivation when I was trying to get fit on my own, but everyone has a laugh at the classes at the centre, they’re really fun. I’ve also made lots of new friends.”

“I can even take the kids along to the Mums on the Move exercise classes, so I don’t have to worry about arranging a babysitter.”

During the 20 weeks while Sarah has been on the programme, she has lost a total of 5.5 kilograms (12 pounds).

Sarah has found that the programme has given her the kick-start she needed to start living a healthier lifestyle. She has encouraged her brother and one of her friends to join the Wellness Centres too.

“I feel loads better after attending the gym. I used to get out of breath just doing everyday things but now I have more energy. I can do more activities with my kids like playing football in the garden or walking.”

Sarah will also be starting the Weight Management component of the programme soon to help her to improve her diet.

If you would like to find out if exercise programmes are for you, you can make an appointment and speak to your GP for more information about the support available in your area.
A healthy approach to food not only helps you to keep in control of your weight, it also helps to combat tiredness by raising energy levels, and can even improve your skin and hair.

The key to a healthy diet is balance. As long as you eat plenty of good stuff, the odd chocolate bar or packet of crisps won’t do you any harm.

- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day;
- Base your meals on starchy foods, such as potatoes, rice, pasta and bread. These are a great source of energy and the main source of a range of nutrients;
- Have moderate amounts of dairy products;
- Keep an eye on your salt intake;
- Eat regular, healthy meals and snacks to maintain your daily energy levels;
- Eat less saturated fats - opt for low-fat foods and check the label to choose unsaturated instead;
- Foods with fibre, such as oats, beans, and peas help you feel fuller for longer;
- Make sure you get enough iron by eating red meats, beans and pulses and green vegetables;
- Drink six to eight glasses of water every day;
- Try to avoid fizzy drinks, as they have no nutritional benefits and are packed with sugar.
Diets
If you are trying to lose weight, a diet can seem like the only option, but the best way to achieve lasting results is actually to adapt your lifestyle gradually rather than dieting.

Eating three small meals a day and a couple of healthy snacks (such as a piece of fruit, a low-fat yoghurt or a bowl of cereal) in between, is a much better way to control your calories. Skipping meals, particularly breakfast, won’t help you lose weight - it’ll just have you reaching for snacks later.

Avoid fad diets as they can prevent you from getting important nutrients and vitamins which your body needs to function properly. You can make simple, healthy changes to your diet without missing out.

Eating Disorders
Anorexia and bulimia are the main eating disorders that affect young adults. Anorexia involves severe, sometimes life-threatening weight loss. Bulimia is more common, and involves binging (eating lots of food) then vomiting or purging with laxatives.

If you are worried that you are suffering from an eating disorder, you can visit your GP to get advice. Alternatively, you can contact the Northern Initiative on Women and Eating (NIWE) for advice and support:

NIWE 0191 221 0233 (Mon-THurs, 10am-2pm)

niwe.org.uk
Domestic violence is when someone experiences threatening behaviour, violence or abuse from either a current or ex-partner or a family member. It can be:

- physical abuse - this could range from pushing or hair pulling, to more serious injuries, like broken bones, and, in extreme cases, death;
- emotional abuse - attacking your personality, or shouting, name calling and threats;
- psychological abuse - making you feel scared or intimidated, or telling you that you are worthless.

Although both men and women can be affected, 77% of those who experience domestic violence are women. People experiencing domestic violence often feel unable to ask for help and feel incapable of taking control of the situation. However, without help, the violence is unlikely to stop.

In an emergency, always call the police by dialling 999. The police have the power to arrest someone if they believe this is necessary to prevent that person physically injuring someone else.

You don’t have to wait for an emergency situation to seek help. You can:

- talk to your doctor, health visitor or midwife;
- call 0808 2000 247, the 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline.
Bullying can make working life or your time as a student at school, college or university miserable. It can cause you to lose all faith in yourself; you can feel ill and depressed, and find it hard to motivate yourself to work.

Bullying can take many forms: from teasing and spreading rumours, to pushing someone around and causing physical harm.

If you become a victim of bullying, remember it’s not your fault, you don’t deserve it, and you should never have to tolerate bullying at any age.

Bullying can happen at work as well as at school or college. Bullying at work can involve arguments and rudeness, but it can also be more subtle. Excluding and ignoring people and their contribution, unacceptable criticisms, and overloading people with work are other forms of bullying.

If you are being bullied at work, speak to your manager and find out about your company’s policy on bullying. If you are a member of a trade union, you can also contact them for help.

Cyberbullying is the use of technology, such as mobiles and the internet, to bully other people. Coping with it can be difficult because it can happen at any time of the day.

**Don’t delete the upsetting emails or messages. Keep the evidence. Even people who use a false name or email can be traced.**

If you are being bullied online through a site such as Facebook, you can report the person who is upsetting you to the website. Instant messaging sites often allow you to block people from contacting you too.

Try not to let yourself get dragged into cyberbullying. Think about the impact of what you say in text messages, chat rooms and emails. Could your words be used to hurt someone else, or could they be turned against you?

**Don’t Suffer in Silence**

Don’t ignore it if you are being bullied or be ashamed to tell people what’s going on - whether it’s in real life or online. You need to let people know what’s happening so that they can help you. Find yourself an ally - you can talk to your friends, colleagues, boss, family and teachers. By sharing your experiences, you may even discover that it’s happening to other people too – you will be able to support each other to get help.
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING
Anxiety
Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear. It can be mild or severe. Sometimes, people can find it hard to control their worries and their feelings of anxiety are constant. Anxiety can sometimes be linked to social situations, such as eating in public, getting up to speak in front of others or speaking in groups.

Self Harm
Self harm is the term used to describe when someone deliberately hurts themselves as a way of dealing with their emotions. If you feel like hurting yourself then you need help with whatever is causing you to feel so desperate. You can visit your GP for support and advice, or contact the National Self Harm Network on:

0800 622 6000
(open 7pm-11pm)

or online: nshn.co.uk

Suicide
If you are having thoughts of suicide, remember you are not alone. There are people who can help you to find a solution and work through your problems. Talk to someone you can trust and tell them how you are feeling. This might be a friend, relative or your GP.

If you feel that you can’t talk to anyone you know or would prefer to talk to someone anonymously, then you can contact Samaritans on

08457 90 90 90
(open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Starting college or university, getting your first job, moving into your own home or having your first serious relationship can all be difficult to cope with. Sometimes one or more of these changes can become too much and can affect your mental wellbeing.

Depression
Depression is when you feel sad for weeks or months, and the sadness interferes with your life. Some of the signs are:
- a loss of interest in life and a feeling you can’t enjoy anything;
- feeling tired and/or having problems sleeping;
- loss of appetite;
- thinking about not wanting to live anymore;
- negative thoughts about the future.

Stress
Stress is a natural feeling which helps us cope with challenging situations. In small amounts it can be good. It pushes us to do our best. But too much stress can be overwhelming, causing unpleasant symptoms to develop such as:
- anxiety;
- churning stomach;
- palpitations (pounding heart);
- sweating;
- shortness of breath;
- depression.
If you’d like to speak to someone anonymously, then you can call one of the following helplines:

**Samaritans**
08457 90 90 90
(open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

If you still feel unwell after talking to someone, then you may benefit from treatment with prescribed medication or counselling, or a combination of both. Your doctor can refer you to specialist NHS counselling services or give prescribed treatment to help you to get better. You can also contact the mental health team in your area directly on the numbers below to find out what help they can offer you:

**Gateshead**
Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)
0191 283 2541

**South Tyneside**
Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)
0191 283 2134 or 0191 283 2136

**Sunderland**
Sunderland Counselling
0191 514 7007

Rachel Rowell is a Graduate Mental Health Worker for NHS South of Tyne and Wear. As part of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service in Gateshead, Rachel works with people with common mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety and stress.

Rachel says:

“Short periods of anxiety or stress are normal. They can often be resolved by something as simple as completing a task or by talking to others and taking time to relax. Think about what in your life is making you feel bad and see if you can make a change to ease the pressure.”

“If you feel unhappy all the time or feel you can no longer cope, don’t keep it a secret. Tell someone how you feel – such as a friend, counsellor or doctor. This may bring an immediate sense of relief.”

Gateshead
0300 123 3393
(Mon-Fri, 9am - 6pm)
If you’re having sex, whether you’re single or in a relationship, the best way to reduce the chances of getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI) is to always use a condom.

STIs mainly affect the penis, vagina or anus and are usually caught when someone has unprotected sex with a person who has an STI. Some STIs can also be transmitted through having unprotected oral sex.

Ideally, you should combine safe sex with regular sexual health check-ups, especially in the early stages of a new relationship. If you have sex after drinking alcohol or taking drugs, you are less likely to use protection. This increases your risk of getting an STI. If you’re going out, keep a condom in your wallet or purse, just in case.

Condoms are available free from your local sexual health clinic. They may also be available from your GP. If you are a student, you can also get free condoms from the university’s welfare department.
Chlamydia is the most common STI amongst people under 25 in the UK. It often has no symptoms, but if left untreated it can lead to more serious long-term health problems and infertility for both men and women. If you have had unprotected sex, or if you have recently had sex with someone new, you should make sure that you haven’t caught Chlamydia by taking a test.

Under 25s can order a free Chlamydia testing kit by texting GREMLIN with their full name and address to 80010 or logging on to:

Other Common Infections
Other common STIs among young adults include genital warts, genital herpes and gonorrhoea. HIV infection is less common but is increasing in young people. Most of these infections can be prevented by using condoms.

Choosing Contraception
There are several types of contraception, which work in different ways:

- male and female condoms create a physical barrier against sperm;
- hormonal methods for women, such as the contraceptive pill or implant, prevent the release of an egg from the ovaries and change the environment of the womb to prevent pregnancy;
- contraceptive devices, such as the IUD (intrauterine device), are placed in the womb and prevent pregnancy by releasing copper or hormones into the body.

The male condom is the only type of contraception that protects men and women from STIs. If you are a woman using a continuous method of contraception for birth control, combine it with using a condom to prevent STIs with new partners.

If you would like more information about contraception and the types available you can visit:

- checkyourbits.org
- brook.org.uk/contraception

You can also get tested for Chlamydia for free at your GP surgery, a sexual health clinic and some pharmacies.
Emergency Contraception
This is contraception you can use to reduce the possibility of pregnancy when you’ve had unprotected sex, or if you think that your usual method has failed. The most common type is the emergency contraceptive pill (sometimes called the morning after pill).

The pill needs to be taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex. It works best within the first 24 hours, but it’s licensed for use up to 72 hours afterwards. You can get the emergency contraceptive pill free from your local sexual health clinic and from some pharmacies.

Unplanned Pregnancy
If you think you might be pregnant, visit your GP or local contraceptive clinic to be tested. You can also buy a test from a chemist.

If the test is positive, you can get impartial advice about your options from your GP, a contraceptive clinic, Brook Advisory Centre or other young person’s services.

Free Condom Cards
The C-card scheme offers a confidential free service which allows young people aged between 14-25 to access free condoms at a variety of locations. You can register for your local condom card scheme at your nearest sexual health clinic.

A new electronic C-card will be launched soon in Sunderland. To find out how to register visit:

yourhealthsunderland.com

Those young people that have SHOWT cards can still use them. Find out where you can go at:

yourhealthsunderland.com/shclinics

Sexual Health Clinics
If you are worried that you may have an STI, or if you would like a sexual health check-up, your local sexual health service will be able to help. Everything that is discussed is completely confidential. Sexual health clinics can also provide contraceptive advice, including free emergency contraception and condoms.

If you would like more information about your local sexual health clinic, such as drop-in clinic opening times, you can contact them on the numbers below:

Gateshead
0800 42 20 200 (Freephone)
or 0191 283 1586

South Tyneside
0191 283 2525

Sunderland
0191 569 9021 (STI advice line)
0191 569 9966 (appointments/advice line)

If you want to find out more about the sexual health services in your area you can also visit:

sotw.nhs.uk
An increasing number of people are baking their bodies on sunbeds. This kind of artificial tanning can have serious consequences in the long term.

Using sunbeds or spending too long in the sun without protection can increase the risk of skin cancer later in life. Malignant melanoma, the worst form of skin cancer, has become the third most common cancer in 15-24-year olds and is now the fastest growing cancer in Britain.

Young skin is more vulnerable to sun damage than older skin. Sometimes the symptoms can take as much as 20 years to appear.

Premature aging of the skin as well as eye diseases (if the correct precautions are not taken) are potential side effects of using sunbeds.

You should avoid sunbeds especially if:
- you are under 18;
- you have been sunburnt in the past, particularly in childhood;
- you have fair skin that burns easily;
- you have a large number of freckles or red hair;
- you have a large number of moles;
- anyone in your family has had skin cancer in the past.

Spray-on tans from salons and fake tanning creams, foams and lotions are much safer than a sunbed tan, and give an equally impressive effect.

Sun Protection
Know your skin type and choose the appropriate protection if you are going out in the sun. Sun safety tips:
- use SPF 15 sunscreen or above;
- keep your skin covered with appropriate clothing such as a T-shirt;
- wear a cap to protect your face and head;
- avoid the midday sun.
My parents have been blood donors for a long time, so I wanted to do it too as soon as I was old enough. I registered just after my 17th birthday.

Chris was a little nervous before his first donation in April. I wasn’t sure what to expect – I had visions of giant needles! But the staff set me at ease as soon as I arrived, they were all really friendly. They made sure I was comfortable and chatted to me whilst I waited for the machine to finish taking my blood.

I had a small bruise afterwards, but it wasn’t painful and it went away quite quickly.

Chris has now given blood for a second time and intends to continue to regularly donate in the future.

I feel great to know that my blood will be used to help other people – it could save somebody’s life.

Giving blood is a relatively simple process and only takes about an hour. Each donation takes about 470ml of blood (just under a pint), which your body quickly makes up, so you shouldn’t feel any negative effects afterwards. You need to be aged 17 or over to donate.

For more information or to register, visit the National Blood Service’s website: blood.co.uk

or call their helpline on 0300 123 2323

Chris Reay, a sixth form student at St. Joseph’s Comprehensive School in Hebburn, has recently started giving blood. The 17-year-old from South Shields was inspired to donate by his family.
Universities and colleges advise students to be immunised against meningitis C and mumps before starting their studies. These infections are rare, but occur more commonly among students. There have been several outbreaks of both infections in a number of UK universities in recent years. Both are serious infections - meningococcal meningitis can kill and mumps can damage fertility.

Most people have the MMR vaccine (which protects us against measles, mumps and rubella) when they are children, but it is not compulsory, so ask your parents or doctor if you are unsure.

If you haven’t already been immunised against meningitis C or mumps, you can arrange to be vaccinated by your doctor.

ORGAN DONATION

Signing up to donate your organs after your death is the greatest gift you can give anyone in need of a transplant.

Although over 3,000 transplants are carried out each year, there are currently more than 9,000 people in need of a transplant. Sadly, over 1,000 of these patients will die while waiting. If you want to sign up, you can register online at:

uktransplant.org.uk

You can select which organs and tissue you want to donate when you sign up. It’s important to tell your family if you decide to become an organ donor. They’ll have to confirm it’s what you wanted.
To find local health services visit the NHS Choices website (www.nhs.uk) and use the ‘Find and Choose Services’ box. Choose a service and then enter your postcode to find out what’s available in your area.

Alternatively, you can contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0800 7312 326 to find out about local health services (Lines are open Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm).

GPs
General practitioners (GPs) or doctors look after the health of people in their local community and deal with a whole range of health problems.

If you have recently moved into the area, then you should make sure that you are registered with a GP. Students should register in the area where they spend most of the year.

Your local doctor’s surgery or GP practice provides a wide range of health services, including:
- confidential advice on health problems;
- vaccinations;
- examinations and treatment;
- prescriptions for medicines;
- referrals to other health services and social services.

If your condition is non-urgent, you can expect to see a doctor within two working days or a health professional such as a nurse within one working day.

You can find your nearest GP by visiting:

or by phoning the North East Primary Care Services Agency on 0191 275 4200 (lines open Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)

Accident and Emergency (A & E)
Accident and Emergency departments are based in hospitals and treat patients with serious injuries or illnesses. They are open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Generally, you should only visit A & E or call 999 for emergencies, such as:
- loss of consciousness;
- pain that is not relieved by simple analgesia; (e.g. by taking paracetamol or a similar over the counter painkiller);
- acute confused state;
- chest pain;
- breathing difficulties;
- blood loss;
- choking.

Your Local A & E Department can be found at:

Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Sheriff Hill, Gateshead NE9 6SX
Tel: 0191 482 0000

South Tyneside District Hospital
Harton Lane, South Shields NE34 0PL
Tel: 0191 404 1000

Sunderland Royal Hospital
Kayll Road, Sunderland SR4 7TP
Tel: 0191 565 6256
Minor Injury and Illness Units (MIIUs)
If your injury is not serious then you can get help from a Minor Injury and Illness Unit (MIIU) or Walk-in Centre. By doing this, you allow A & E staff to concentrate on people with serious and life-threatening conditions and save yourself a potentially long wait.

MIIUs and Walk-in Centres are often nurse-led services and an appointment is not necessary. They can treat:
- sprains and strains;
- broken bones (arm and lower leg);
- minor cuts and bruises;
- minor burns and scalds;
- minor eye conditions and infections;
- urine problems;
- skin rashes;
- ear and throat infections;
- bites and stings.

Local Minor Injury and Illness Units:

**Gateshead**

**Blaydon Minor Injury and Illness Unit**
Shibdon Road, Blaydon NE21 5NW  
Tel: 0191 443 6302  Open 8am–8pm

**Gateshead Walk-in Centre at Bensham Hospital**
Gateshead NE8 4YL  
Tel: 0191 445 5454  Open 7am–10pm

**South Tyneside**

**Palmer Community Hospital**
Wear Street, Jarrow NE32 3UX  
Tel. 0191 402 8040  
Monday to Thursday, 9am–12.30pm, 1.30pm–5pm  
Friday, 9am–12.30pm, 1.30pm–4.30pm

**South Tyneside District Hospital**
Minor Injury Unit, Harton Lane, South Shields NE34 0PL  
Tel: 0191 404 1000  Open 24 hours a day

**Bunny Hill Primary Care Centre**
Hylton Lane, Downhill, Sunderland SR5 4BW  
Tel: 0191 519 5800  Open 8am–8.15pm

**Grindon Lane Primary Care Centre**
Grindon, Sunderland SR3 4DE  
Tel: 0191 525 2300  Open 24 hours a day

**Washington Primary Care Centre**
Park Way, Washington NE38 7QZ  
Tel: 0191 502 7569  Open 8am–8pm

**Sunderland**

**South Tyneside**

**Palmer Community Hospital**
Wear Street, Jarrow NE32 3UX  
Tel. 0191 402 8040  
Monday to Thursday, 9am–12.30pm, 1.30pm–5pm  
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Tel: 0191 502 7569  Open 8am–8pm
Pharmacy (Chemist)
You can obtain both over-the-counter medicines (which do not need a prescription from your doctor) and prescribed medicines from a pharmacist.

Pharmacies also offer services such as:
- expert advice on medicines;
- advice on common conditions;
- pregnancy testing;
- advice on healthy living and minor ailments.

You can talk to your pharmacist in confidence and you don’t need to make an appointment. They could save you a trip to your GP. Some pharmacies are also open outside of usual hours.

If you want to know where your nearest pharmacy is, visit:

www.nhs.uk

and use the ‘Find and Choose Services’ box.

Other Options
You can ring NHS Direct for advice if you have a general health worry. You will be put through to a trained nurse who can give you information on all health-related issues.

Phone: 0845 4647 (open 24 hours)

The service is also available online:

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Dentists
It’s important to go to the dentist regularly for check-ups to keep your teeth and gums healthy.

How often you attend depends on the state of your teeth. If you have good oral health, you’ll only need to be seen once a year (or sometimes two years), but many NHS dentists recommend you have a basic dental check-up once every six months.

You can find your nearest NHS dentist by calling our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0800 7312 326 or by visiting:

www.nhs.uk