Ambulatory emergency care (AEC)

This factsheet explains what to expect when you visit the ambulatory emergency care (sometimes called AEC) service.

What is ambulatory emergency care?
Ambulatory emergency care is a service which provides same day emergency care to patients in hospital. Patients are assessed, diagnosed, treated and are able to go home the same day, without being admitted overnight. In ambulatory emergency care we treat many common conditions including headaches, DVT, cellulitis and diabetes.

We aim to arrange any tests or treatment required during your visit to enable you to go home the same day. In order to complete this within one visit you may be in hospital several hours.

Referral
You may have been referred to ambulatory emergency care by:
- your GP
- the emergency department
- the acute medical unit (AMU)

Please note that if you require help completing daily activities, a carer should accompany you to the ambulatory emergency care department.

What will happen during your visit
Assessment
A nurse or doctor will make an initial assessment, asking a series of questions about your symptoms, past medical history and details of any medications you are taking. You will then be examined. It may be necessary for some diagnostic tests to be carried out or you may need to see another member of our specialist team.

Diagnostic tests
These may include the following:
- X-ray: this may be of your chest, abdomen or other area
- CT scan: a computerised tomography scan may be necessary to provide a more detailed view than is possible with an x-ray
- MRI scan: a magnetic resonance image scan provides a very detailed view compared to a CT or x-ray
- Ultrasound: this uses sound waves to produce images of internal organs like the liver and kidneys
- Echocardiogram: this is a specialised ultrasound scan of your heart

It may be necessary to carry out further diagnostic tests or refer you to a specialist clinic. On occasion we may ask to see you at a later date for a review in ambulatory emergency care.

Treatment
You may receive treatment whilst in the department, or we may recommend treatment is started by your GP.
Test results
Where possible we’ll give you the results of any tests during your visit. We’ll contact you by telephone to confirm the result of any tests that aren’t available straight away.

Waiting times
If you have been given a time slot to attend ambulatory emergency care, please be on time for your appointment. Please note that patients are not always seen in time order as they may be waiting to see different specialists. Every effort is made to ensure that you are not kept waiting too long to be seen. The average time spent by patients in ambulatory emergency care is approximately four hours, although this may be longer for some procedures or complex tests.

Going home
We will make you aware of your likely discharge time. You will be asked to make your own way home or have somebody collect you. Should this be a problem please ensure the staff in the unit are made aware. There is a discharge lounge next to the unit for you to use while waiting for someone to collect you.

Privacy and dignity
We treat male and female patients in the same location. You will not be asked to put on a hospital gown unless specifically needed for your treatment or assessment and we will ensure that your privacy and dignity is maintained at all times.

AEC opening hours
Monday to Friday 9am to 11pm
Saturday, Sunday and Bank holidays 9am to 2pm

Date of next appointment

How to comment on your treatment
Please complete a Friends and Family Test form and a patient questionnaire before you leave today. If you have any concerns or worries, please speak to a member of staff.

Contact us
Ambulatory Emergency Care, C Level, North Wing, University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, Tremona Road, Southampton SO16 6YD

Tel: Reception 023 8120 6284

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.