

Media Release

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Middlemore Emergency Departments urge patients to get treated early

Middlemore's Emergency Care department is bracing themselves for the Christmas rush by urging non-urgent patients to get treated early.

The Christmas holiday is an increasingly busy period for the emergency departments covering most of the central North Island and can be stretched dealing with patients who need serious and urgent medical help.

Counties Manukau District Health Board is urging patients to visit their GPs before Christmas to top up prescriptions or be treated for minor illnesses such as coughs or colds or long-term illnesses so they don't clog up the emergency departments.

Middlemore Hospital Emergency Department's clinical director Dr Vanessa Thornton said the hospital deals with more than double the number of patients during the Christmas and New Year period. Many injuries are alcohol-related or the result of household and barbeque accidents. She said the summer period was getting steadily busier each year and most injuries being treated were accidents that could be seen and treated in local Accident and Medical centres.

In the past, Middlemore has counted New Year's Day as amongst their busiest of the year and extra staff are rostered on during that time. Middlemore Hospital is the region's main provider for people with more serious conditions such as heart attacks, drownings, burns or injuries from serious car accidents.

Dr Thornton said while GPs were often closed during the public holiday, there was always a doctor on call to help.

"The problem with people coming in to renew their prescriptions, is that it takes away from more seriously ill patients having a heart attack, or who have crashed their car or have a serious injury." Dr Thornton said it was frustrating for staff when patients didn't plan ahead for their medical problems and she wanted to make sure they knew they had other options before they visited the emergency department.

"The emergency department can be unbelievably busy and there are not as many services available to us around the hospital."

For further information, please contact Lauren Young, 021 823 590