

Minor injuries overnight

Information for people attending the
Emergency Department in the evening

Every night, the Emergency Department (ED) cares for people who are seriously ill or badly injured and need immediate emergency treatment.

Because of this, if you have a minor injury, you may have a very long wait before you are assessed and treated. We want to be honest about this delay so you can decide what is best for you.

Can my injury wait until the morning?

For most minor injuries, it is safe to wait until the next morning for assessment and treatment. In most cases, waiting overnight will not cause any harm or affect your recovery.

Examples of injuries that can often safely wait until the next day include:

- suspected minor breaks (fractures) or sprains
- minor arm or leg injuries
- wrist, hand, foot or ankle injuries
- minor shoulder, elbow or knee injuries
- injuries that need an X-ray, but where the pain is manageable and there is no significant deformity

Many Minor Injury Units (MIUs) in Cornwall close in the evening, with most closing by 8pm.

If it is suitable for your injury, you may find it quicker and more comfortable to go home and attend either the Emergency Department or your local Minor Injury Unit the following morning, rather than waiting overnight in ED.

We understand that being injured can be worrying. However, many people prefer to rest at home overnight rather than spend many hours waiting in a busy Emergency Department.

What happens next?

If the Emergency Department is your closest service

The triage nurse may offer you an appointment to return to the Emergency Department the next morning.

If a Minor Injury Unit is closer to your home

The triage nurse may be able to arrange an X-ray appointment for you at your local Minor Injury Unit the next morning.

After your X-ray, the Minor Injury Unit team will continue your assessment and treatment.

If you have been given a morning appointment

Do

- ✓ attend as early as possible
- ✓ check local opening times before you travel.
X-ray departments usually open between 8am and 9am
- ✓ go to the X-ray department first
- ✓ after your X-ray, book in at the Minor Injury Unit reception desk
- ✓ The Minor Injury Unit clinical team will discuss your X-ray results and any treatment you may need

Note

Please be aware that patients are seen according to how urgent their condition is. This means that people with more serious injuries or illnesses may be seen before you, even if they arrived later.

When should I return to the ED overnight?

Please return to the Emergency Department immediately, or seek urgent medical advice, if:

- your pain becomes much worse or is not controlled with simple pain relief
- you develop new or worsening numbness, tingling or pins and needles
- you notice changes to the injured area such as increasing swelling, colour change, or your hand or foot becomes cold
- you cannot move your fingers or toes
- you are worried about circulation to the injured limb
- your injury changes significantly or you become more concerned
- you feel unable to manage safely at home

If at any point you are concerned about your condition, please return to the Emergency Department for further assessment.

Our commitment to you

We understand that nobody wants to wait when they are injured. By being open about overnight waiting times and offering alternative arrangements where appropriate, we aim to make sure that patients receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time, while avoiding unnecessary overnight waits in the Emergency Department.

Thank you for helping us keep emergency care available for those who need it most urgently.

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