



Self-discharging from the Children's Emergency Department

This leaflet explains what happens when you choose to discharge your child from the Children's Emergency Department before a full assessment is completed.

Why you might self-discharge before your child is medically assessed

Common reasons include:

- A long wait to be seen
- Feeling that the illness or injury is not urgent and can be managed by your GP
- The problem that brought you to the Emergency Department has gone

Why do you need to wait?

Your child is important to us, and every child will be seen.

Children come to the Emergency Department with many different illnesses and injuries. They are not always seen in order of arrival. Some children need to be seen more urgently than others, depending on how unwell they are. There are some children who have specific injuries or illnesses that can only be seen by staff trained specifically in these conditions. And there are some children who may be seen directly by specialty teams in the Emergency Department (rather than be seen by an Emergency Department doctor or nurse). This is likely to mean your child may have to wait before they are seen.

Waiting allows us to:

- Carry out a **full medical assessment** of your child's illness or injury
- Provide **treatment** if needed
- Give **advice about follow-up care**
- Explain **signs and symptoms to watch for**, including when to seek further help

What happens if you still choose to self-discharge?

If you choose to self-discharge your child and leave **before a full medical assessment**, please be aware that:

- The discharge is against medical advice
- You must inform a member of the nursing team before leaving the department. You will be asked to sign a self-discharge form.

Important advice following self-discharge:

- See your **GP**, attend **another urgent care centre**, or return to the **Emergency Department within 24 hours** if your child's symptoms are still present

- **Monitor your child closely at home**
- **Return to the Emergency Department** if your child's condition **worsens**

Sharing your information

- A **discharge letter** is automatically sent to your GP to inform them of your child's Emergency Department attendance
- For children **under 5 years**, we may notify your **health visitor**
- For children **aged 5 years and over**, we may notify the **school nurse**
- Sometimes, we need to inform **children's social care**, for example:
 - If your child already has an allocated social worker
 - If safeguarding concerns were identified during your visit

Can you be asked to come back?

This depends on why your child attended the Emergency Department.

If the medical team believes your child needs **urgent treatment**, they may ask you to return.

If you refuse to return and there are concerns about your child's wellbeing, we may need to **contact social care** to ensure your child receives appropriate assessment and care.

Will self-discharging and leaving mean you cannot come back?

No. If your child's symptoms continue or worsen, you can return to the Emergency Department **at any time**.

Services and information available after leaving the Emergency Department

- **NHS 111:** Simply dial **111** (free from mobiles and landlines) to get help for your symptoms. Available 24/7.
- **Your GP:** Contact your GP surgery for ongoing care, advice, or follow-up appointments.
- **Pharmacist:** Pharmacists can suggest treatments without a prescription for many conditions. Most pharmacists can also provide prescription medicines for certain conditions without you needing to see a GP first.

Conditions pharmacists can treat with prescription medicine:

- Impetigo (aged **1 year and over**)
 - Infected insect bites (aged **1 year and over**)
 - Earache (aged **1–17 years**)
 - Sore throat (aged **5 years and over**)
 - Sinusitis (aged **12 years and over**)
 - Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) – **women aged 16–64 years**
 - Shingles (aged **18 years and over**)
- **Eye Casualty:** The Eye Casualty Department at the Royal Berkshire Hospital is open Monday to Friday: 8am-5pm and Saturday and Sunday (Bank Holiday): 9am-12:30pm.

Online health information

- NHS website: www.nhs.uk
- Healthier Together: www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk

Tell us your views

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your treatment and care, please speak to a senior member of staff or to the nurse looking after you. The matrons are also available during normal working hours and they welcome your views.

You can also pick up a copy of the Trust leaflet called 'Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)', which explains how you can raise concerns or give feedback on your experience at the hospital or visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/services-and-departments/patient-advice-and-liaison-service-pals.

Friends and Family Test

Whatever your experience, you can give feedback by completing the Friends & Family test by going online www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/friends-and-family-test/ or using the link sent to you in an SMS text message.

Remember

If your child feels worse than expected shortly after leaving the Emergency Department, please get help straight away by:

- **Calling NHS 111. Dial '111' (free from mobiles and landlines)**
- **Contacting your GP or out-of-hours GP service**
- **Returning to the Emergency Department**

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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Next review due: October 2028.