



Information for patients, relatives and carers

See and Treat

The Emergency Department - how it works

Within the emergency department, patients are seen on a priority basis. During the day, we use the 'See and Treat' policy set up by the government in order to ensure patients, particularly those with less serious injuries or complaints, are seen just as efficiently as those with more serious illness or injuries.

Traditionally, patients attending with less serious complaints often had to wait until the more serious patients had been seen first, as their conditions warrant immediate attention.

Under the new government policy, during the day, patients who are less serious are 'streamed' into a flow where they see either an emergency nurse practitioner or a doctor. Within this policy, all patients should be greeted as they enter the department and directed to the appropriate area to be seen by the appropriate person. This system replaces the traditional triage system with which you may be familiar with. The idea is to ensure these patients are not constantly left waiting in favour of more serious patients. Obviously, if there is a major accident or a critical patient who requires the attention of a lot of staff, there may still be some delays being seen, but these should not be as long as they were under the previous system.

Out-of-hours and overnight, the department may revert back to the triage system, where patients are categorised according to priority of need. This is a result of less staff being on duty at these times.

On occasion during the day, there may be the need for the department to revert back to the old triage system and not follow 'See and Treat'. These occasions would usually be as a result of a lack of staff on duty, a serious incident or multiple critical patients who require intensive staff assessment and care.

The greeting nurse, along with the triage nurse (out-of-hours), is an experienced nurse and will be able to help and direct you as necessary, and should be your point of contact if you are waiting in the waiting area.

The priority categories and aimed waiting times for when 'See and Treat' is not in place, are as follows:

Priority One: here patients must be seen immediately in the resuscitation area due to life threatening conditions (immediate).

Priority Two: very urgent, for example severe chest pain, unconscious, burns (within 10 minutes).

Priority Three: urgent, for example serious eye injuries, abdominal pain (within 60 minutes).

Priority Four: this is the standard category for all patients whose injury/complaint is not threatening to life or limb (within 120 minutes)

Priority Five: non-urgent, for example long-standing problems, over a week old (within 240 minutes).

Within the department we also offer Emergency Nurse Practitioner (ENP) service. These nurses are a senior level and fully qualified to assess and treat certain patients without reference to a doctor. You may find that some patients may be called before you if they can be seen by an ENP, and you need to wait to see a doctor. By working together, the ENPs and doctors are able to provide a much more efficient service. Please ask if you are in doubt or have any concerns.

The 'See and Treat' system is a relatively new concept from the Department of Health, and we are trying to provide the service as best we can. Please feel free to let us know if there is anything we can improve on, in order to make your attendance to the department as safe and efficient as possible.

Thank you for your co-operation. We hope you did not have to wait too long, and the care received was to your satisfaction.

① If you have further concerns about your condition, please contact your GP. If you are not sure what to do, call 111 or get help from 111 online: <https://111.nhs.uk/> [When to use NHS 111 - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print, Easy Read or audio, please ask the staff who are looking after you.

Date this version published	November 2022
Review Date	November 2025
Document Reference	PIL1461 v2, See and treat

© 2022 York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. All Rights reserved.

www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk