

Media Release

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On Monday afternoon Tauranga Hospital's Emergency Department was extremely busy.

Bay of Plenty District Health Board's chief operating officer Phillip Balmer said a sudden influx of people presenting with minor injuries, influenza symptoms and non emergency aches and pains resulted in a brief period when predetermined contingency plans were considered for implementation.

"182 people presented at our Emergency Department in the 24-hour period 8am Monday to 8am Tuesday, and we admitted 66 people. That put additional pressure on the hospital which had been very busy in the past month.

To cope with the influx Mr Balmer said the clinical teams considered implementing contingency plans which would have included discharging people early, cancelling the elective surgery, transferring people to Whakatane Hospital, and postponing some outpatient's procedures. Fortunately the unprecedented influx slowed and no drastic measures were needed to be put in place.

Mr Balmer repeated his earlier advice that people who are unwell, injured or in need of health care services but are not in need of emergency or specialist care should either call the free Healthline or go to their GP first.

"If you go to your GP and your GP decides you need specialist care you will be referred to us and you will be fast tracked through our system."

"At this busy time we need to keep ED for those who need it most.

In addition, Mr Balmer said there are some simple measures people can take to help protect themselves from one of the major causes of the increase in ED attendances seasonal influenza, which include:

- Getting the seasonal influenza vaccine which is available from GPs and is free for many high risk groups including pregnant women in whom the vaccine is safe and recommended.
- Basic hygiene influenza prevention measures like regular hand washing; staying home if you are sick; covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing.

Contact

Diana Marriott, Communications Manager, Phone: 021 227 0452