

OPHTHALMIC SERVICES

Christmas and New Year Period

Advice for Access to Acute Eyecare Services

It is **essential** that all practices have clear, straightforward information for patients on the practice opening times during the holiday period and how the patient may access emergency care if they have an urgent eye problem that cannot wait. You are advised to have a message on your telephone and on your practice website, Facebook® page or other social media platform that you use.

The message should be clear and give information on the practice opening hours and **state that if the practice is closed and the patient has a very urgent problem that cannot wait, they should contact their nearest hospital Emergency Department.**

If your practice is to be closed for longer than the public holiday period you may wish to consider a “buddy” arrangement with another practice for managing your patients with minor acute eye problems

Please take time to consider the above and ensure that you have a clear and concise advice message for patients when they contact your practice when it is closed. Please ensure that you ‘test’ the message prior to activating it.

Information and advice for managing acute eyecare over the holiday period - for practice use only

1. BHSC Eye Casualty Service

This service will be **closed on Christmas Day 2020**. Patients with an eye emergency will be directed to attend their local ED. This has been advised through BHSC social media.

On Boxing Day (26th), 27th & 28th Dec and New Year’s Day there will be cover as follows:

Clinical advice line, for practitioner use only, for triage advice and to arrange appointments available 8.30 – 1pm

Outside 8.30-1pm for urgent cases contact the RVH switchboard tel: 02890240503 and ask for the ophthalmologist on call.

Appointments will be available from 8.30 -10am and 1-3pm. for patients whom Eye Casualty deems require an appointment.

Reminder: no walk-in patients are accepted, they must all have an appointment arranged by their optometrist, GP or the main ED if they attend there. Please **do not** direct patients to the make contact with Eye Casualty via the patient advice line themselves.

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2. WHSCT Eye Casualty Service

Practitioners should contact Altnagelvin Hospital switchboard tel: 028 71345171, as usual, and ask for the ophthalmologist on call.

As with BHSCT above, patients cannot ring directly and should be advised to contact their nearest Emergency Department if they have a very urgent problem that cannot wait.

General Advice from the Eye Casualty Service when you need to send a patient to the service

1. **Always telephone** Eye Casualty before sending a patient to the service as only patients with appointments will be seen. No walk in patients will be accepted.
GPs have the same advice

2. **Contact Numbers use by for Optometry Practices:**
 - **BHSCT Eye Casualty:** telephone no: 02896150095
Usual hours of clinic are Mon – Friday 8.30 - 6pm and Sat & Sun 8.30 -1pm.
For out of hours urgent cases that cannot wait until Eye Casualty next open contact RVH telephone switchboard tel: 90240503 and ask for the ophthalmologist on call

 - **WHSCT Eye Casualty :** telephone Altnagelvin Hospital switchboard tel: 028 71 345171 and ask for the ophthalmologist-on-call.

3. **Referral letter:**
 - **Always** give the patient a referral form to take to the hospital even if you have already provided clinical details on the phone.

 - **Use** the new Optometry Eye Casualty referral and feedback form
<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/Optom%20Eye%20Casualty%20Ref%20and%20Feedback%20Form.pdf>

 - **Complete** the practice address box on the second, feedback, side of the form if you want to receive feedback on your referral from the EC clinicians.

 - **Refraction details:** please include the most recent refraction when it may be relevant and useful e.g. with referrals for PVD/retinal tear or detachment / macular conditions.

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4. Patient directions:

- **RVH Eye Casualty** - please tell the patient it is now located in the **Old Victorian Corridor** in the main hospital and is clearly signposted in yellow and black signs from the main entrance.
- **Altnagelvin** - please tell the patient to go to the main ED reception desk.

5. Dilation: Advise the patient that it is very likely that they will have dilating drops and therefore should be accompanied by a driver to the appointment.

6. Glasses: Ask the patient to bring their glasses with them to Eye Casualty

Contact lenses: If the patient is being referred because of a contact lens related problem send the contact lenses **and the contact lens case** with them so that they may have microbial testing if necessary.

For further advice contact any of the advisers:

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