**Stretcher, stethoscope**

**Accident and emergency (A&E)**

This department (sometimes called Casualty) is where you're likely to be taken if you've called an ambulance in an emergency.

It's also where you should come if you've had an accident, but can make your own way to hospital.

These departments operate 24 hours a day, every day and are staffed and equipped to deal with all emergencies.

Patients are assessed and seen in order of need, usually with a separate minor injuries area supported by nurses.

**Anaesthetics**

Doctors in this department give **anesthetic** for operations.

They are responsible for the provision of:

* acute pain services (pain relief after an operation)
* chronic pain services (pain relief in long-term conditions such as **arthritis**),
* critical care services (pain relief for those who have had a serious accident or trauma)
* obstetric anaesthesia and analgesia (**epidurals** in childbirth and anaesthetic for **Caesarean sections**).

**Breast screening**

This unit screens women for **breast cancer**, either through routine mammogram examinations or at the request of doctors. It's usually linked to an **X-ray** department.

**Cardiology**

**Term watch**

* Outpatient: short visit to hospital that lasts no more than a day.
* Inpatient: hospital visit that requires at least one night's stay on a ward.

This department provides medical care to patients who have problems with their heart or circulation. It treats people on an inpatient and outpatient basis.

Typical procedures performed include:

* **electrocardiogram (ECG)** and exercise tests to measure heart function
* echocardiograms (ultrasound scan of the heart)
* scans of the carotid artery in your neck to determine stroke risk
* 24-hour **blood pressure tests**
* insertion of pacemakers
* cardiac catheterisation (coronary angiography) to see if there are any blocks in your arteries.

**Chaplaincy**

Chaplains promote the spiritual and pastoral wellbeing of patients, relatives and staff.

They are available to all members of staff for confidential counsel and support irrespective of religion or race. A hospital chapel is also usually available.

**Critical care**

Sometimes called intensive care, this unit is for the most seriously ill patients.

It has a relatively small number of beds and is manned by specialist doctors and nurses, as well as by consultant anaesthetists, physiotherapists and dietitians.

Patients requiring intensive care are often transferred from other hospitals or from other departments in the same hospital.

**Diagnostic imaging**

Formerly known as X-ray, this department provides a full range of diagnostic imaging services including:

* general radiography (X-ray scans)
* scans for A&E
* mammography (breast scans)
* **ultrasound scans**
* **angiography** (X-ray of blood vessels)
* interventional radiology (minimally invasive procedures, eg to treat narrowed arteries)
* **CT scanning** (scans that show cross sections of the body)
* **MRI scanning** (3D scans using magnetic and radio waves).

**Discharge lounge**

Many hospitals now have discharge lounges to help your final day in hospital go smoothly.

Patients who don't need to stay on the ward are transferred to the lounge on the day of discharge. Staff will inform the pharmacy, transport and relatives of your transfer.

To help pass the time, there are usually facilities such as a TV, radio, magazines, puzzles, books and newspapers.

If someone feels unwell while waiting, nurses contact a doctor to come and see you before discharge.

**Ear nose and throat (ENT)**

The ENT department provides care for patients with a variety of problems, including:

* general ear, nose and throat diseases
* neck lumps
* cancers of the head and neck area
* tear duct problems
* facial skin lesions
* balance and hearing disorders
* snoring and sleep apnoea
* ENT allergy problems
* salivary gland diseases
* Voice disorders.

**Elderly services department**

Led by consultant physicians specializing in geriatric medicine, this department looks after a wide range of problems associated with the elderly. This includes:

* **stroke** medicine
* gastroenterology
* **diabetes**
* locomotor (movement) problems
* continence problems
* syncope (fainting)
* bone disease.

It provides a range of services such as home visits, day hospitals and outpatient clinics. The department often has close links with other community services for the elderly.

**Gastroenterology**

**Endoscopy**

Endoscopy involves a small thin tube with a camera on the end.

This is guided down the throat to investigate problems in your oesophagus and digestive system.

Small surgical instruments can be guided down in the same way, meaning it can be used for diagnosis and treatment.

Run by consultants specialising in bowel-related medicine, this department investigates and treats upper and lower gastrointestinal disease, as well as diseases of the pancreas and bile duct system.

This includes endoscopy and nutritional services.

Sub-specialties include colerectal surgery, inflammatory bowel disease and swallowing problems.

There are often endoscopy nurse specialists linked to a gastroenterology unit who are able to perform a wide range of bowel investigations.

**General surgery**

The general surgery ward covers a wide range of surgery and includes:

* day surgery
* thyroid surgery
* kidney transplants
* colon surgery
* laparoscopic cholecystectomy (gallbladder removal)
* endoscopy
* Breast surgery.

Day surgery units have a high turnover of patients who attend for minor surgical procedures such as hernia repairs.

**Gynaecology**

These departments investigate and treat problems of the female urinary tract and reproductive organs, such as endometritis, **infertility** and **incontinence**.

They also provide a range of care for cervical smear screening and post-menopausal bleeding checks.

They usually have:

* a specialist ward
* day surgery unit
* emergency gynecology assessment unit
* Outpatient clinics.

**Hematology**

Hematology services work closely with the hospital laboratory. These doctors treat blood diseases and malignancies linked to the blood, with both new referrals and emergency admissions being seen.

**Maternity departments**

Women now have a choice of who leads their maternity care and where they give birth. Care can be led by a consultant, a GP or a midwife.

Maternity wards provide antenatal care, care during **childbirth** and postnatal support.

Antenatal clinics provide monitoring for both routine and complicated pregnancies.

High-dependency units can offer one-to-one care for women who need close monitoring when there are complications in pregnancy or childbirth.

**Microbiology**

The microbiology department looks at all aspects of microbiology, such as **bacterial and viral** infections.

They have become increasingly high profile following the rise of hospital-acquired infections, such as **MRSA** and C. difficile.

A head microbiology consultant and team of microbiologists test patient samples sent to them by medical staff from the hospital and from doctors' surgeries.

**Neonatal unit**

Neonatal units have a number of cots that are used for intensive, high-dependency and special care for newborn babies.

It always maintains close links with the hospital maternity department, in the interest of babies and their families.

Neonatal units have the philosophy that, whenever possible, mother and baby should be together.

**Nephrology**

This department monitors and assesses patients with kidney (renal) problems.

Nephrologists (kidney specialists) will liaise with the transplant team in cases of kidney transplants.

They also supervise the dialysis day unit for people who are waiting for a kidney transplant or who are unable to have a transplant for any reason.

**Neurology**

This unit deals with disorders of the nervous system, including the brain and spinal cord. It's run by doctors who specialize in this area (neurologists) and their staff.

There are also pediatric neurologists who treat children. Neurologists may also be involved in clinical research and clinical trials.

Specialist nurses (epilepsy, multiple sclerosis) liaise with patients, consultants and GPs to help with any problems that may occur between outpatient appointments.

**Nutrition and dietetics**

Trained dieticians and nutritionists provide specialist advice on diet for hospital wards and outpatient clinics, forming part of a multidisciplinary team.

The department works across a wide range of specialties such as:

* diabetes
* cancer
* kidney problems
* pediatrics
* elderly care
* surgery and critical care
* Gastroenterology.

They also provide group education to patients with diabetes, heart disease and osteoarthritis, and work closely with weight management groups.

**Obstetrics and gynaecology units**

These units provide maternity services such as:

* antenatal and postnatal care
* prenatal diagnosis unit
* Maternal and fetal surveillance.

Overseen by consultant obstetricians and gynaecologists, there is a wide range of attached staff linked to them, including specialist nurses, midwives and imaging technicians.

Care can include:

* general inpatient and outpatient treatment
* colposcopy, laser therapy or hysteroscopy for abnormal cervical cells
* psychosexual counseling
* recurrent miscarriage unit
* early pregnancy unit.

**Occupational therapy**

This profession helps people who are physically or mentally impaired, including temporary disability after medical treatment. It practices in the fields of both healthcare and social care.

The aim of occupational therapy is to restore physical and mental functioning to help people participate in life to the fullest.

Occupational therapy assessments often guide hospital discharge planning, with the majority of patients given a home assessment to understand their support needs.

Staff also arranges provision of essential equipment and adaptations that are essential for discharge from hospital.

**Oncology**

This department provides radiotherapy and a full range of chemotherapy treatments for cancerous tumours and blood disorders.

Staffed by specialist doctors and nurses trained in oncology (cancer care), it has close links with surgical and medical teams in other departments.

**Ophthalmology**

Eye departments provide a range of ophthalmic services for adults and children, including:

* general eye clinic appointments
* laser treatments
* optometry (sight testing)
* orthoptics (non-surgical treatments, eg for squints)
* prosthetic eye services
* ophthalmic imaging (eye scans).

**Orthopedics**

Orthopedics departments treat problems that affect your musculoskeletal system. That's your muscles, joints, bones, ligaments, tendons and nerves.

The doctors and nurses who run this department deal with everything from setting bone fractures to carrying out surgery to correct problems such as torn ligaments and hip replacements.

Orthopaedic trauma includes fractures and dislocations as well as musculoskeletal injuries to soft tissues.

**Pain management clinics**

Usually run by consultant anaesthetists, these clinics aim to help treat patients with severe long-term pain that appears resistant to normal treatments.

Depending on the hospital, a wide range of options are available, such as acupuncture, nerve blocks and drug treatment.

**Pharmacy**

The hospital pharmacy is run by pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and attached staff.

It's responsible for drug-based services in the hospital, including:

* the purchasing, supply and distribution of medication and pharmaceuticals
* inpatient and outpatient dispensing
* clinical and ward pharmacy
* the use of drugs.

A pharmacy will provide a drug formulary for hospital doctors to use as a guide. It will also help supervise any clinical trial management and ward drug-use review.

**Physiotherapy**

Physiotherapists promote body healing, for example after surgery, through therapies such as exercise and manipulation.

This means they assess, treat and advise patients with a wide range of medical conditions. They also provide health education to patients and staff on how to do things more easily.

Their services are provided to patients on the wards, in the physiotherapy department itself and in rehabilitation units.

Physiotherapists often work closely with orthopaedic teams.

**Radiotherapy**

Run by a combination of consultant doctors and specially trained radiotherapists, this department provides radiotherapy (X-ray) treatment for conditions such as malignant tumors and cancer.

**Renal unit**

Closely linked with nephrology teams at hospitals, these units provide haemodialysis treatment for patients with kidney failure. Many of these patients are on waiting lists for a kidney transplant.

They also provide facilities for peritoneal dialysis and help facilitate home haemodialysis.

**Rheumatology**

Specialist doctors called rheumatologists run the unit and are experts in the field of musculoskeletal disorders (bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles and nerves).

Their role is to diagnose conditions and recommend appropriate treatment, if necessary from the orthopedic department.

The rheumatologist may need to review you regularly, either in person or via one of the rheumatology team.

Alternatively, your condition may be one your GP can manage in the community. Many conditions are managed jointly between the GP and the hospital care team.

**Sexual health (genitourinary medicine)**

This department provides a free and confidential service offering:

* advice, testing and treatment for all sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
* family planning care (including emergency contraception and free condoms)
* pregnancy testing and advice.

It also provides care and support for other sexual and genital problems.

Patients are usually able to phone the department directly for an appointment and don't need a referral letter from their GP.

**Urology**

The urology department is run by consultant urology surgeons and their surgical teams. It investigates all areas linked to kidney and bladder-based problems.