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If you are sick or injured this Christmas, the emergency department may not be your only option...

Up to two-thirds of emergency room patients presenting at night and on weekends could have been treated by a GP, according to local data.

With the upcoming Christmas and New Year period just around the corner, our local emergency departments are bracing for an increased patient load. The good news is that for non-urgent medical assistance, the hospital is not always your only option and a long wait in the emergency department may not be necessary.

To help reduce the burden on our emergency departments Wentworth Healthcare, provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, developed the DoctorClosed.com.au website which helps local residents find after hours medical services.

According to Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay, "Most people would prefer to see a GP rather than go to an emergency department but many people don't know what other options are available when their regular GP is closed."

"The Doctor Closed website provides local residents with alternative options – there is a helpline and the ability to find doctors that open outside of usual business hours," said Ms Reay.

DoctorClosed.com.au allows you to search for a GP who is open after hours or for doctors who can make home visits. You can also find pharmacies that are open or talk to a health professional 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on the **healthdirect helpline**, to get advice about your medical issue.

"Over the upcoming Christmas and New Year holidays, it's important that people know what options are available, and where they can go when their usual doctor is closed. This will help to free up our emergency departments for urgent medical issues," said Ms Reay

The Doctor Closed website has translated pages in seven different languages, making the information easily accessible for multicultural communities.

For further information visit www.DoctorClosed.com.au.

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