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**STAYWELL  
THISWINTER**



Cheryl Sowell, Nurse

# **NHS Stay Well This Winter**

**Do you have a long-term health condition or are you 65 or over?**

**Some important information from the NHS to help you to stay well this winter.**

**Share this today with any relatives, friends, neighbours or anyone else you know who might find it useful.**

## **Get ready for winter**

Winter conditions can be seriously bad for our health, especially for people aged 65 or older, and people with long-term health conditions. The cold and damp weather, ice, snow and high winds can all aggravate any existing health problems and make us more vulnerable to illnesses that are more common in winter.

Being cold can raise the risk of increased blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes. But there are lots of things you can do to stay well this winter.

## **Make sure you get your flu jab**

The flu virus strikes in winter and it can be far more serious than you think. Flu can lead to serious complications such as bronchitis and pneumonia, and it can be deadly.

That's why the flu jab is free if you're aged 65 or over, or if you have a long-term health condition. If you have children or grandchildren aged two, three or four, or in school years one or two, they are eligible for a free flu vaccination.

And if you are the main carer of an older or disabled person you may also be eligible for the free flu jab. Just speak to your GP.

Also, don't forget that if you're aged 65 or over, you are eligible for the pneumococcal vaccine, which will help protect you from pneumococcal diseases such as pneumonia.

## **Keep warm**

It is important to keep warm in winter – both inside and outdoors. Keeping warm over the winter months can help to prevent colds, flu and more serious health problems such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and depression.

**Heat your home to at least 18°C (65°F).** You might prefer your main living room to be slightly warmer.

**Keep your bedroom window closed on winter nights.** Because breathing cold air can be bad for your health as it increases the risk of chest infections.

**Keep active when you're indoors.** Try not to sit still for more than an hour or so.

**Wear several layers of light clothes.** Because they trap warm air better than one bulky layer.

**Make sure you're receiving all the help that you're entitled to.** Learn how to make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating and keep up with your energy bills at [www.gov.uk/phe/keep-warm](http://www.gov.uk/phe/keep-warm)

**And check your heating and cooking appliances are safe.** Contact a Gas Safe registered engineer to make sure they're operating properly.

## **Feeling unwell? Don't wait – get advice from your nearest pharmacist**

Winter can make existing health problems worse. So if you feel like you're coming down with something, even if it's just a cough or a cold, don't wait until it gets worse. Act quickly. The sooner you get advice from a pharmacist the better.

Pharmacists are fully qualified to advise you on the best course of action. So go to see a pharmacist as soon as you start to feel unwell. This can be the best and quickest way to help you recover and get back to normal.

If you can't get to a pharmacist yourself, ask someone to go for you or call your local pharmacy.

## **Is your medicine cabinet ready for the winter?**

Most common winter ailments, such as a cold, sore throat, cough, sinusitis or painful middle ear infection (earache), can't be treated with antibiotics.

The best thing to do is:

- Rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Have at least one hot meal a day to keep your energy levels up
- Talk to your pharmacist for advice on getting any pain relief you need such as paracetamol or ibuprofen.

Your pharmacist can advise you on which medicines you should have in your cabinet, to help get you and your family through the winter season.

### **Take medicines as directed**

If you've been prescribed antibiotics or any other medication, make sure you take them as directed.

### **Look out for other people**

Remember that other people, like older neighbours, friends and family members, may need a bit of extra help over the winter. There's a lot you can do to help people who are more frail than you.

Icy pavements and roads can be very slippery and cold weather can stop people from getting out and about. **Keep in touch** with your friends, neighbours and family and ask if they need any practical help, or if they're feeling under the weather.

**Make sure they're stocked up with enough food supplies** for a few days, in case they can't go out. If they do need to go out in the cold, encourage them to **wear shoes with a good grip and a scarf around the mouth** to protect them from the cold air, and to reduce their risk of chest infections.

And make sure they **get any prescription medicines before the holidays start on 24 December** and if bad weather is forecast.

If you do need help over the holiday period when your GP surgery or pharmacy is closed, call NHS 111 speak to a call adviser who will be able to direct you to a local service that is open. You can also visit NHS Choices at **[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

### **Five things we recommend you do:**

Make sure you get your flu jab.

Keep your home at at least 18°C (65°F) if you can.

Take advantage of financial schemes and discounts to help you pay for heating.

Visit your local pharmacist as soon as you start to feel unwell.

Look out for other people who may need a bit of extra help over the winter.

**Write down your local pharmacy number here:**

**Things I need to remember to do for winter:**

**Here to help you stay well this winter.**

**Call 111.** If you need medical help fast, but it's not life threatening or you're not sure where to go, a 111 adviser will assess you and direct you to the best placed service in your area. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Ask a pharmacist.** They're highly trained healthcare experts, on everything from colds to long-term health conditions.

**Visit a walk-in centre.** They're mainly run by nurses who can treat minor illnesses and injuries on the spot. You don't need an appointment and they're open outside office hours.

**Contact your GP.** Many GPs can offer advice over the phone and can arrange referral to a hospital specialist if you need it.

**A&E departments.** They're there for life-threatening emergencies. But if you're not sure whether it is an emergency, call 111 first.

**For more information and advice visit  
[www.nhs.uk/staywell](http://www.nhs.uk/staywell)**

This leaflet is available in this and other formats from  
[www.campaignresources.phe.gov.uk](http://www.campaignresources.phe.gov.uk) or by emailing  
[enquiries@phe.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@phe.gov.uk)

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