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# We're here to help you stay well this winter

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

**STAY WELL  
THIS WINTER**



[www.nhs.uk/staywell](http://www.nhs.uk/staywell)

Richard Pile, GP

# **NHS Stay Well This Winter**

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## **Stay well this winter**

Winter conditions can be seriously bad for our health, especially for people aged 65 or older, and people with long-term conditions such as COPD, bronchitis, emphysema, asthma, diabetes or heart or kidney disease.

Being cold can raise the risk of increased blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes.

The cold and damp weather, ice, snow and high winds can all aggravate any existing health problems and make us more vulnerable to respiratory winter illnesses. But there are lots of things you can do to stay well this winter.

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

At the first sign of a winter illness, even if it's just a cough or cold, get advice from your pharmacist, before it gets more serious. 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.

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.

## **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, two and three, 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 or pharmacist.

You can also find more information at **[www.nhs.uk/getflujab](http://www.nhs.uk/getflujab)**

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. Ask your GP.

## **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.** 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.** Several layers 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. Visit [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk)

## **Check your medicine cabinet**

Ask your pharmacist what medicines should be in your cabinet to help get you and your family through the winter season.

Many over-the-counter medicines (including paracetamol and ibuprofen) are available to relieve symptoms of common winter ailments, such as colds, sore throat, cough, sinusitis or painful middle ear infection (earache).

So talk to your pharmacist for advice on getting the relief you need.

To manage winter illness symptoms at home:

- Rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Have at least one hot meal a day to keep your energy levels up
- Use over-the-counter medications to help give relief.

## **Prescriptions**

Make sure you get your prescription medicines before your pharmacy or GP practice closes for Christmas.

You can also order your repeat prescriptions online. To sign up to GP online services ask at your practice or to find out more visit

**[nhs.uk/GPonlineservices](https://www.nhs.uk/GPonlineservices)**

And, 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, such as 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 Christmas holidays start** and if bad weather is forecast.

If they need help over the holiday period when the GP practice or pharmacy is closed, call **NHS 111** and speak to a call adviser who will be able to direct you to a local service that is open. You can also find information 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 18°C (65°F) or higher 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 with the symptoms of a respiratory winter illness.
- 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:**

## **Where to go for the right medical care**

**999** - For life threatening emergencies call **999**

**Call 111** - If you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency, call NHS 111 for clinical advice, assessment and for direction to the most appropriate services for treatment.

**GP, Pharmacy, [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)** - For less urgent health needs, contact your GP or local pharmacist. You can also access NHS advice at **[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

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

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**[www.nhs.uk/staywell](http://www.nhs.uk/staywell)**

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Produced by Williams Lea and BDS Communications  
for Public Health England