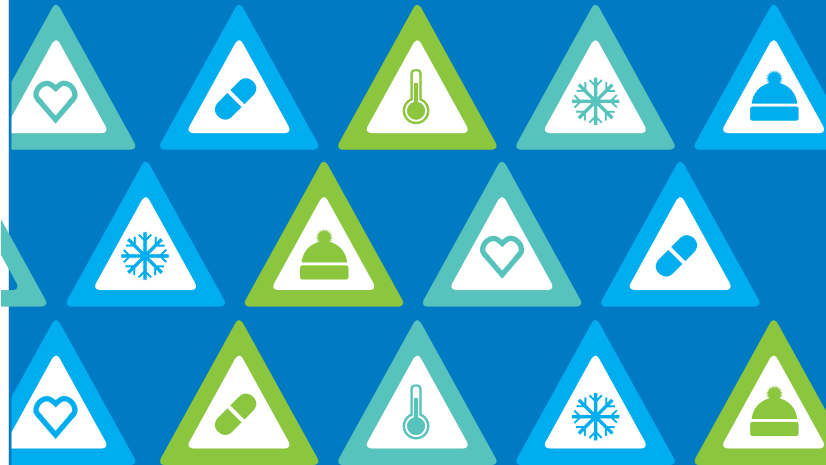


# Stay healthy this winter



Information to help you through  
the cold winter months ahead



# Contents

-  **3 Stay healthy this winter**  
an introduction
-  **4 Top tips**  
for keeping warm in the cold weather
-  **6 Be prepared**  
for winter weather
-  **8 Safe winter driving**  
tips to keep you safe on the roads
-  **9 Knock next door**  
be a good neighbour this winter
-  **10 Flu**  
flu jabs and general information
-  **15 Hypothermia**  
information, danger signs and action
-  **16 NHS 111**  
access to local health services
-  **18 Contact**  
useful local contact numbers
-  **19 Alternative formats**  
translations and alternative formats





## Stay healthy this winter

**During the winter months more people suffer illness or are injured than at any other time of the year.**

Everyone needs to take the cold weather seriously and look after themselves, family, friends and neighbours.

### **Vulnerable people include:**

- ▲ the elderly
- ▲ people with long term health conditions such as heart or lung disease
- ▲ babies and the very young
- ▲ those living in cold, damp homes and the homeless
- ▲ people with disabilities.

Remember, there are a number of ways in which you can stay healthy this winter:

**Self Care** for minor illnesses, combine over the counter medicines with plenty of rest.

**Visit your Pharmacist/Chemist** for advice on illnesses and the right medicines.

**Make an appointment with your GP** for medical advice, examinations and prescriptions for illnesses you can't shake off.

**When it's less urgent than 999**





## Top tips for keeping well in cold weather

**Keep warm:** At home, close curtains and shut the doors to keep heat in. Have your heating system serviced and remember that by setting your heating to the correct temperature 21 degrees C (70 degrees F) during the day and 18 degrees C (64 degrees F) at night, you can still stay warm and lower your bills.



**Stay warm at night:** Have a hot drink before you go to bed and use hot water bottles or an electric blanket if you feel cold at night.



**Eat well:** Try to have regular, hot meals and drinks throughout the day. Don't skip meals, as eating regularly keeps energy levels up during the winter and remember to stock up on frozen food – especially vegetables – in case it is too cold to go shopping.



\*If possible, stay inside during a cold period if you have heart or breathing problems





### Wrap up warm, inside and out:

Several thin layers are better than one thick layer. Always wear hats, gloves and scarves when going outside and don't stand around for long periods. When sitting inside, keep a shawl or blanket handy.



**Keep active:** Move around at least once an hour and don't sit down for long periods of time. Even light exercise will help keep you warm and improve circulation. Chair based exercises or simply moving your arms and wiggling your toes can be helpful if walking is difficult.



**Remember coughs and sneezes spread diseases** - Reduce the risk of spreading winter illnesses and remember to carry a tissue, cover your cough or sneeze with the tissue, bin the tissue safely and quickly and wash your hands with soap and warm water or anti-bacterial gel.





## Be prepared for winter weather

### At home

- ▲ Check if your house is on a salting route
- ▲ Plan where you will park your car
- ▲ Check you have got sturdy footwear for walking in snow. Do you own Wellington boots?
- ▲ Keep a water supply. Extreme cold can cause water pipes in your home to freeze and sometimes break
- ▲ Learn how to shut off water valves (in case a pipe bursts)
- ▲ Have a supply of your prescription drugs and remember to keep simple cold, flu and sore throat remedies in the house and get advice from your pharmacist on how to manage minor illnesses
- ▲ Have a wind up torch and radio, in case of power cuts.

### **Add the following supplies in preparation for winter weather to your emergency kit:**

- ▲ Rock salt or table salt to melt ice on pathways
- ▲ Snow shovels and other snow removal equipment
- ▲ Also include adequate clothing and blankets to keep you warm.





## In the kitchen

- ▲ Have a week's worth of food and safety supplies, including bread in the freezer, longlife milk and non-cook foods. If you live far from other people, have more supplies on hand:

### Emergency store cupboard ideas:

- ▲ Tinned or frozen fruit and vegetables
- ▲ Tinned soup
- ▲ Tinned meat and fish
- ▲ Baked beans
- ▲ Frozen meat and fish
- ▲ Frozen loaves of bread
- ▲ Rice
- ▲ Pasta
- ▲ Porridge
- ▲ Instant mash
- ▲ Longlife or powdered milk
- ▲ Teabags/coffee
- ▲ Toilet rolls
- ▲ Toothpaste
- ▲ Soap.





## Safe winter driving

### Remember to check that:

- ▲ Tyres are in good condition and inflated to the correct pressure
- ▲ Screen washers are full and engine antifreeze and oil are at the correct levels
- ▲ Windscreens are clear of snow and ice before starting your journey
- ▲ Lights are in full working order and are kept clean especially from snow, dirt and spray.

### Before setting off on your journey make sure that you have:

- ▲ Checked the local and national weather forecast and the Internet for severe weather warnings
- ▲ Listened to radio travel information
- ▲ Told someone of your destination and arrival time
- ▲ Checked your mobile phone to ensure it is fully charged
- ▲ Thought about taking warm clothing, boots and a torch; it could be a long walk home.

A little time spent preparing for winter driving could prevent serious accidents and reduce the chance of becoming stranded in poor weather conditions.





# Knock next door - be a good neighbour this winter

We are encouraging people to 'knock next door' and help out friends and neighbours during the bad weather.

Please remember to:

**Be a good neighbour**  
by calling on those living near by to check if they need anything.



**Look after the vulnerable**  
by getting in touch with people who are ill, older or on their own and may need a helping hand.



**Keep drives & footpaths clear**  
by shovelling snow for friends and neighbours if they struggle to do it themselves and need to go out.





# ASK US ABOUT FLU

It is important that those who are at risk from flu remember to get their jab as soon as it becomes available in October to ensure they are protected for the whole winter.



**Flu**  
Protect yourself  
and others

**NHS**  
*North East*





## Don't forget your flu jab

### People who need the free flu jab include:

- ▲ All Pregnant women
- ▲ Anyone over 65
- ▲ Anyone who lives in a nursing home
- ▲ Anyone over six months old with a long-term health problem such as diabetes, a chest problem or breathing difficulties (including asthma, bronchitis or emphysema) a heart problem, kidney or liver disease or a neurological condition (such as Parkinson's or motor neurone disease). Included in the list are also people who have a problem with the spleen (such as sickle cell disease) or have had their spleen removed; people who have suffered a stroke and those who have a lowered immune system due to disease (such as cystic fibrosis or Crohn's disease) or treatment (such as cancer treatment).

If you live with someone who has a lowered immune system you may also be eligible for a free vaccination. This is because flu symptoms take around two days to develop and, just like carers, you may have the virus and pass it onto those who are more vulnerable than you without even realising you have done so.





## Flu myths busted

There are many myths about flu and the jab, but flu can be serious - even fatal - so you need to know the facts.



**I had the flu jab last year, so I don't need it again.**



The flu virus changes every year, which means that slightly different virus strains circulate from previous years. You will have no immunity to these new strains which is why you will need the jab every year to protect yourself from catching flu and to stop the virus from spreading to vulnerable people or members of your family.



**Flu is a mild illness so I don't need to be vaccinated.**



For the majority of people, flu is simply unpleasant, but for those who are at risk flu is much more serious. They can develop serious complications such as bacterial chest infections, pneumonia and breathing difficulties which can be fatal. More than 600 people in the UK died because of flu last year. Each winter it contributes to the deaths of around 8,000 people.





**The side effects of the jab are worse than having the flu.**



Some people may experience a mild fever up to 48 hours after having the flu jab as their immune system responds to the vaccine, but this is not flu. Most people suffer nothing worse than a slightly sore arm.



**I've heard the vaccine doesn't work.**



Most people who have the jab will not get flu but, like any vaccine, it does not give 100 percent protection. The majority of people will be fully protected, some will get milder symptoms but a small number may still get flu.



**I can't have the vaccine if I'm pregnant.**



All pregnant women can have the flu jab. The earlier you have the jab the better, as this means you will be protected for the whole winter and it may also give your unborn baby some protection against flu during the first six months of life.

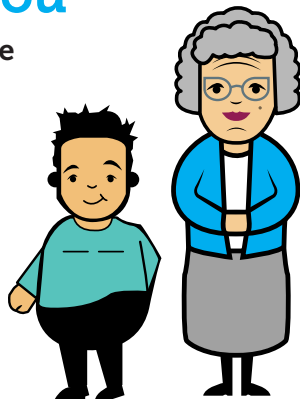




## Forget antibiotics- The No.1 cure for colds and flu is...You

### Antibiotics won't cure

- ▲ Sore throats
- ▲ Headaches
- ▲ Runny noses
- ▲ Raised temperatures
- ▲ Coughs
- ▲ Blocked noses
- ▲ Poor appetite.



Although antibiotics are extremely important, they are designed to treat specific illnesses caused by bacteria rather than to cure viral infections such as colds, coughs and flu. It's not unusual for a chest or head cold to last for up to three weeks. Taking antibiotics won't speed up your recovery.

Think ahead and stock up your medicine cabinet now so you have something to help you when you need it. But please remember to check with your pharmacist before buying or taking any medicines for colds and flu, because they can sometimes interfere with other prescribed tablets or medicines you may be taking.

If your child complains or symptoms such as a stiff neck, a very bad headache, a dislike of bright lights and has a rash that will not fade when pressed with a glass, seek help immediately.





## About hypothermia

**Hypothermia is a condition where the body becomes dangerously cold. It can be caused by brief exposure to extreme cold or by prolonged exposure to mild cold.**

Hypothermia is a serious concern for older people who might be prone to falls or collapses.

If it's not treated quickly, it can be fatal. People with chronic or severe illness are likely to be at particular risk of current illnesses becoming worse from mild hypothermia.

### Danger signs

**If someone has these symptoms, they may be suffering from hypothermia:**

- ▲ very cold skin even under clothes, for example, across the stomach or under the arms
- ▲ drowsiness and slurred speech
- ▲ loss of sensation – not being able to tell when it is cold.

### Taking action

**If you think someone may have hypothermia, take immediate action:**

- ▲ dial 999 for an ambulance
- ▲ try to warm the person gradually by warming the room, wrapping them in a blanket or duvet, and giving them a warm drink
- ▲ don't give them alcohol or try to warm them up quickly.





If you are in the County Durham and Darlington area and need urgent medical care or advice but you're not sure where to go...



**NHS 111** is a new free to call phone number which makes it easier for you to access local health services.

If you need urgent healthcare or out of hours care, you should call **NHS 111** before you go to any other service. By calling **NHS 111** you will be directed straightaway to the local service that can help you best.

**Easier access to non-emergency healthcare, wherever you are, 24 hours a day**





## When should I call NHS 111?

### Call NHS 111

- ▲ when you need help fast but it is not life threatening
- ▲ when you think you need to go to A&E or another NHS urgent care service
- ▲ when it's outside of GP surgery hours
- ▲ when you are visiting the area
- ▲ when you do not know who to call for medical help
- ▲ by dialling 111 first you will be directed straightaway to the local service that can help you best.

## What will happen when I call NHS 111?

You will be asked questions and assessed by a fully trained call adviser who will give advice and direct you straightaway to the local service that can help you best.

Call advisers are supported by clinicians who are on hand to assess callers' needs and ensure they receive the right service, first time, as quickly as possible.

If it is an emergency, an ambulance will be despatched immediately without the need for any further assessment. For any other health problems, the NHS Call 111 advisers will be able to direct you to the service that is best able to meet your individual needs.



**When it's less urgent  
than 999**





## Useful contact numbers

### Highways Action Line (Durham):

0191 370 6000

or email [HAL@durham.gov.uk](mailto:HAL@durham.gov.uk) - for enquiries about the salting of roads and footpaths.

### Social Care Direct (Durham):

0845 850 5010 –

for concerns about someone's welfare.

### Durham County Council:

0300 123 7070 for all other issues,

or visit [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk) Highways Action

### Highways Action Line (Darlington):

01325 388799

### Social Care Direct (Darlington):

01325 346 200

### Darlington Borough Council:

01325 380 651 for all other issues

**Winter Fuel Allowance:** 0845 9151515

### Patient Advice Line & Liaison Service:

0800 195 7998

### NHS County Durham and Darlington:

0191 301 1300





## Alternative formats

This information is available in other formats and in other languages by telephoning 0191 374 4109

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