

We're here to help you stay well this winter

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

www.nhs.uk/staywell

Your
health
matters

Help us
help you



Heidi Nielsen, Nurse

Stay well this winter

If you're worried about your health, don't delay, your NHS wants to see you – help us help you get the care you need this winter.

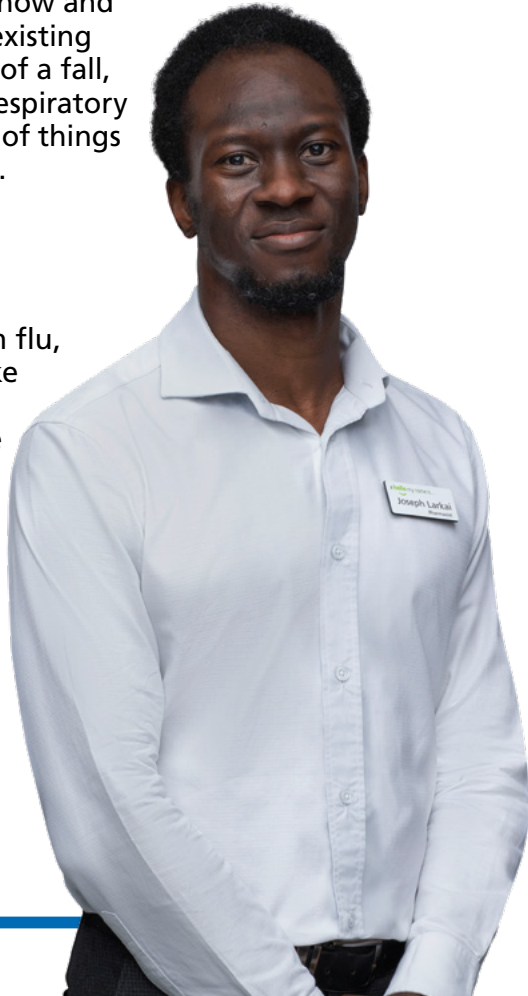
Winter conditions can be bad for our health, especially for people aged 65 or older, and people with long-term conditions such as heart or kidney disease, COPD (including emphysema and chronic bronchitis), asthma or diabetes.

Being cold can raise the risk of increased blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes which can all have an impact on our kidneys.

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

Stay strong with winter vaccines

Many people get seriously ill from flu, including having complications like bronchitis or pneumonia, and every winter thousands of people die. COVID-19 can also still make people seriously ill. The risk from these viruses is greater during winter when they circulate most as people spend more time indoors.



Joseph Larkai, Pharmacist

People who have chronic kidney disease stage 3-5, those on dialysis or who have had a transplant along with people aged 65 and over, those who are pregnant; as well as unpaid carers and household contacts of those at risk, will be able to get protected this winter by getting their flu and COVID-19 vaccinations.

It's important to come forward if you are eligible, even if you have had previous flu and COVID-19 vaccinations or have had one of the viruses, as protection will fade and both viruses can change over time.

You may be invited to get your free winter vaccines by the NHS through the NHS App, text, email or letter. Don't worry if you do not receive this – you do not have to wait for it before booking an appointment. If you are eligible, once these winter vaccines are available to you, go ahead and book. If eligible, you can book a flu vaccine through your GP practice or local pharmacy. Many areas will also offer local vaccination walk-in options which do not require a booking.

If you are pregnant you are eligible for your winter vaccinations at any stage in your pregnancy. For flu, you can ask your GP practice, pharmacist or maternity team.

It is important that children get protected against flu to protect them from getting seriously ill and spreading the virus onto those that are vulnerable. The nasal spray flu vaccine is offered free through schools and community venues for school-aged children, so parents should keep an eye out for the consent form that will get sent to them. All children aged 2 or 3 can get the vaccine through their GP practice. Speak to your GP about whether this is suitable for your household, particularly if your child or one of your household members is severely immunosuppressed.

Also, don't forget that if you're aged 65 or over, or have certain health conditions, including chronic kidney disease, you are eligible for the pneumococcal vaccine, which will help protect you from pneumococcal diseases such as pneumonia. Ask your GP practice.

Getting your flu and COVID-19 vaccines are two of the most important things you can do to keep yourself and others around you safe this winter.

How to avoid passing on flu and COVID-19 to others

Advice from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is to:

- Stay at home if you're unwell and work from home if you can – this helps reduce the number of people you have contact with.
- Avoid contact with people while you have symptoms, especially if they have certain long-term health conditions, which means that they're at higher risk of illness such as pneumonia, flu and COVID-19.
- Let people who need to come into your home know that you have symptoms.

Treatments for COVID-19

The NHS offers treatments to people with COVID-19 who are at the highest risk of becoming seriously ill. This includes people who have CKD stage 4 and 5, are on dialysis or have had a transplant.

For more information, visit www.nhs.uk/CovidTreatments

If you are eligible for COVID-19 treatments, you should keep rapid lateral flow tests at home to use when you develop symptoms. If you have any symptoms of COVID-19, take a test as soon as possible, even if your symptoms are mild. From 6 November, in England, people who are eligible for Covid-19 treatments will be able to collect free lateral flow tests from community pharmacies. This will replace the current process of ordering tests online and via 119.

If your test is positive, call your GP practice, hospital specialist or NHS 111 as soon as possible. They'll decide if you need referring for an assessment for COVID-19 treatment.

If your test result is negative, but you still have symptoms of COVID-19, you need to do a total of 3 rapid lateral flow tests over 3 days.

Keeping yourself and your home warm

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.

It is important to heat your home to a temperature that is comfortable for you. This should be at least 18°C in the rooms that you regularly use such as your living room and bedroom. Low indoor temperatures can have a serious impact on your health, especially if you have medical conditions or are older.

With the rising cost of living, simple changes can help to keep you and your home warm now.

- Try to reduce draughts – you can fit draught excluders around doors cheaply.
- Keep your bedroom windows closed at night.
- Wear several layers of thinner clothing – this will keep you warmer than one thicker layer.
- Ensure you are eating enough and having hot drinks. If you are on a fluid restriction make sure you take this into account with hot drinks and remember that soups and sauces are included in your fluid allowance.

There is a range of information about how to keep warm and well at www.kidneycareuk.org/cost-of-living

Check for safety concerns around your home

It can be useful to take some simple steps to make your home a safer place. For example, moving rugs and mats at the top or the bottom of the stairs out of the way, installing a night light near the bed to make sure you can see where you're going if you wake up in the night, and removing trip hazards like trailing wires or clutter from your home.

It's also important to think about fire safety. Most fires in the home start accidentally. Understanding why fires start and what you can do to prevent them will help keep you, other people and your property safe. Having working smoke alarms on every floor of your home can provide the vital early warning should a fire start.

You can complete an online home fire safety check yourself. After answering a few questions about you and your home, it will provide fire safety advice specific to you and tips on how to keep you and your household safe from fire.

For your free online home fire safety check, visit www.ohfsc.co.uk

Seeking financial support

Make sure you're receiving all the help you're entitled to this winter, as some people with chronic kidney disease may be eligible for certain benefits. The Kidney Care UK free Benefits Calculator can help you find out what benefits you may be able to claim at www.kidneycareuk.entitledto.co.uk

Kidney Care UK has advice, including ways to lower your utility bills and cutting the cost of your food shop, at www.kidneycareuk.org/cost-of-living

Kidney Care UK also has a range of financial support available for kidney patients and their families. You can find out more about this at www.kidneycareuk.org/financial-support

The government has also published energy saving tips to help you save money on bills at www.helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk

Keep active

There's strong evidence that people who are inactive have an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, depression and dementia. Regular exercise can help improve your physical and mental health, reduce the risk of falling and can be beneficial for recovery if you do get ill.

Before starting any new physical activity, check with your GP or kidney doctor.

UKHSA advises to reduce the amount of time you spend sitting down during the day. There are many activities you could do at home to keep active. For tips and ideas on keeping active go to www.nhs.uk/keepactive



Gareth Dixon,
Health and Wellbeing Coach

Mental health support

We all feel down from time to time, no matter our age. But if you are struggling with your mental health, NHS Talking Therapies could help you feel better.

Speak to your GP practice about NHS Talking Therapies if you are anxious, depressed or struggling to cope. Your GP team is there to help you – physically and mentally – and can refer you to the right service. You can also self refer by visiting www.nhs.uk/talk

Kidney Care UK provides a free telephone counselling service for people with kidney disease and their families. You can find out more about this service at www.kidneycareuk.org/counselling or by calling 01420 541 424.

If you live with serious mental illness, you are entitled to a free NHS annual health check – talk to your GP, key worker or mental health service to book it.

If you or a loved one are experiencing a mental health crisis, you can call your local NHS mental health helpline for 24-hour advice and support: information and contact details available on www.nhs.uk/urgentmentalhealth

Check your medicine cabinet

Ask your pharmacist what medicines should be in your cabinet to help you and your family this winter.

Many over-the-counter medicines (including paracetamol) are available to relieve symptoms of common winter illnesses such as colds. Your pharmacist can help if you need any advice. If you have chronic kidney disease, you should ask your doctor or pharmacist to check through the medications you are taking because certain medicines, such as ibuprofen, belong to a family called NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) that can be harmful to your kidneys and increase your blood pressure.

To manage winter illness symptoms at home, you should keep warm, rest, drink plenty of fluids, have at least one hot meal a day to keep your energy levels up and use over-the-counter medicines to help give relief.

For more information search 'medicines' on www.nhs.uk

Hand washing

Cases of infectious illnesses can increase over winter, including highly contagious infections such as flu and norovirus, also called the 'winter vomiting bug'. These can make all of us unwell and can be especially serious for those of us who are more vulnerable, like the elderly and those people with certain health conditions.

Washing your hands with soap and water is one of the easiest ways to protect yourself and others from catching these viruses and help reduce the pressures on healthcare services.

Washing your hands properly removes dirt, viruses and bacteria to stop them spreading to other people and objects and can help stop the spread of common winter infections. Hand washing is particularly important when you're visiting someone in hospital or another healthcare setting.

If you do not have immediate access to soap and water, then use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

For more information go to www.nhs.uk/handwashing

Dr Adebola Adisa, GP



Prescriptions

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

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

You can order prescriptions via GP or pharmacy websites, by calling them, or via NHS-approved apps. Ask a friend, relative or volunteer to collect medicines for you.

A list of NHS-approved apps is here
www.nhs.uk/approvedproviders

You can also order your repeat prescriptions via the NHS App, as well as make GP appointments. The NHS App is available on the App Store and on Google Play. For more information visit
www.nhs.uk/nhsapp



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.

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.

Where to go for the right medical help



999

Dial 999 for life-threatening emergencies



111

111.nhs.uk

If you need medical help fast or think you need to go to an Emergency Department (A&E) use NHS 111 first – online or by phone* – to get clinical advice or direction to the most appropriate services for treatment



**GP
Pharmacy**

For all other health needs, contact your pharmacy or GP practice. You can also access NHS advice and information at www.nhs.uk

*If you are a BSL user, have hearing loss or difficulties communicating you can call NHS 111 by text relay on **18001 111** or use the NHS 111 British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter service by visiting www.111.nhs.uk

A standard version of this leaflet is available in alternative formats from nhs.uk/staywell. For braille versions of the standard leaflet email england.campaigns@nhs.net