



UK Health
Security
Agency

NHS

We're here to help you stay well this winter

Useful advice and
information from
the NHS to help
you stay well
this winter.

**Your
health
matters**

**Help us
help you**

nhs.uk/StayWell

**Olutayo,
Pharmacist**





Stay well this winter

Winter conditions can worsen existing health problems, especially for people aged 65 and over, or those with heart disease, kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma or diabetes. Being cold can also cause your blood pressure to rise, potentially increasing the risk of strokes and heart attacks.

But, there are lots of things you can do to stay well this winter.

Stay strong with winter vaccines

Free NHS vaccines are the best way to help protect yourself and your family this winter. Winter viruses, such as flu, spread more during colder months. The vaccines will help to protect you against these illnesses and reduce your chances of becoming seriously ill or needing hospital care.

Flu vaccine

The free NHS flu vaccine is available to people most at risk from flu, and their carers. Flu viruses change each year, so you need to get vaccinated every year.

You can get the free NHS vaccine if you are:

- aged 65 or over
- aged 6 months to 64 years with certain long-term health conditions

**Sheikh,
GP**





- aged 2 to 3 years
- pregnant
- living in a care home
- the main carer for an older or disabled person, or receive a carer's allowance
- living with someone who has a weakened immune system
- someone experiencing homelessness (rough sleepers and those using homeless hostels or night-shelters)

How to book: Contact your GP practice, use the NHS App, visit nhs.uk/BookFlu, or call **119**. You may also be able to get your flu vaccine at a participating community pharmacy or at your care home. Find a list of participating pharmacies at nhs.uk/flu-pharmacy.

School-aged children from reception to year 11 are offered the vaccine through immunisation services that visit schools.

Frontline health and social care workers can also get a flu vaccine through their employer.

COVID-19 vaccine

COVID-19 vaccines are for people at highest risk of serious illness. This includes:

- people aged 75 or over
- people aged 6 months to 74 years who have a weakened immune system because of a health condition or treatment
- residents in an older adult care home





How to book: Contact your GP practice, use the NHS App, visit nhs.uk/BookCovid, call **119**, or find walk-in centres at nhs.uk/covid-walk-in.

RSV vaccine

Some people are eligible for a vaccine to protect against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). They include:

- people aged 75 and over
- individuals aged 65 to 74, with a weakened immune system due to a medical condition or treatment, or who have long-term lung conditions (such as COPD or poorly controlled asthma)
- all residents in older adult care homes

RSV affects the airways and lungs and can cause pneumonia or acute bronchitis, leading to thousands of hospitalisations each year. If you are eligible, you only need the RSV vaccine once.

How to book: Contact your GP practice to book or speak to a member of staff at your care home. You may be able to get the vaccine at a community pharmacy in some areas. The RSV vaccine should be given separately from the flu vaccine.

**Jaza,
Nurse**





Other vaccines

If you're aged 65 or over, have certain health conditions, or are experiencing homelessness, you're eligible for a pneumococcal vaccine that protects against a major cause of pneumonia. This can be given at the same time as flu and COVID-19 vaccinations. Ask your GP practice for more information.

If you're aged 70 to 79, are over 18 and have a severely weakened immune system, or turned 65 on or after 1 September 2023, you can get a shingles vaccine to reduce your risk of getting the disease. Your GP practice will usually contact you when you become eligible for the vaccine. Speak to your GP practice if you think you're eligible and haven't been contacted.

You can find out more about all NHS vaccines at nhs.uk/vaccinations.

Preventing respiratory infections

Flu and respiratory tract infections are often spread through coughs and sneezes. To reduce the risk of spreading infections:

- cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze (if you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow, not into your hand)
- wash your hands regularly
- throw away used tissues immediately





Keep warm

Keeping warm during winter can help prevent colds, flu and more serious health problems such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and depression.

Age UK and UK Health Security Agency suggest heating 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.

You can reduce draughts by fitting draught excluders around doors, or using an old towel to cover gaps. Keep your bedroom windows closed at night and wear several layers of thin clothing, which will keep you warmer than one thick layer. Make sure you're eating enough and having hot drinks.

Financial support

There are grants, benefits and advice available to help make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating or manage energy bills.

You can check what benefits you might be eligible for at [gov.uk/benefits-calculators](https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators).

Laura,
Occupational Therapist





Find out what support is available to help with bills and costs at gov.uk/cost-of-living.

You can get further advice at ageuk.org.uk or by calling **0800 169 6565**.

Home safety

Sometimes even familiar environments can become difficult to navigate as we get older. Age UK advises making some simple changes to feel safer and more comfortable at home. Keep stairs and hallways clear of clutter and move rugs away from the top or bottom of stairs. Make sure floors are free of trailing wires and damaged rugs or carpets.

Consider installing handrails in useful places, such as by the bath and in the garden. Non-slip mats can help prevent slipping at home. If you wake during the night, a night light near your bed will help you see where you're going. Motion-activated lights can be particularly helpful. Having working smoke alarms on every floor provides vital early warning if a fire starts.

Test smoke alarms monthly and consider getting a carbon monoxide alarm for rooms with gas, oil, coal or wood-burning appliances.

For more information about fire safety, visit firekills.campaign.gov.uk.





Keep active

Regular exercise can improve your physical and mental health, reduce your risk of falling, and help with recovery if you do get ill. Try to reduce the time you spend sitting during the day.

There are many activities you can do at home to keep active. For tips and ideas, visit nhs.uk/KeepActive or ageuk.org.uk/active.

Prescriptions

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

You can order your repeat prescriptions via the NHS App. The NHS App is available on the App Store and on Google Play. For more information visit nhs.uk/NHSAApp.

You can also order repeat prescriptions by contacting your GP practice. Ask a friend, relative or volunteer to collect medicines for you if needed.

Mona,
Pharmacist





Managing winter illness

If you do become unwell, you can manage symptoms by staying warm, resting, drinking plenty of fluids, and eating at least one hot meal a day to keep your energy levels up.

Many over-the-counter medicines, including paracetamol and ibuprofen, can relieve symptoms of common winter illnesses such as colds and earache.

Pharmacists can offer advice and treatments for a range of illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats, ear infections and aches and pains.

Find your local pharmacy at nhs.uk/find-a-pharmacy.

COVID-19 treatments

The NHS offers treatments to people with COVID-19 who are at highest risk of becoming seriously ill. If you're eligible for COVID-19 treatments, keep rapid lateral flow tests at home and test as soon as you develop symptoms, even if they're mild.

If your test is positive, call your GP practice, hospital specialist or NHS 111 as soon as possible. They will decide if you need an assessment for COVID-19 treatment. For more information, visit nhs.uk/CovidTreatments.





Mental health support

We all feel down from time to time, no matter our age. You can find information and tips on keeping mentally healthy at nhs.uk/every-mind-matters.

NHS Talking Therapies can help if you're struggling with things like feelings of depression, excessive worry, social anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). You can refer yourself at nhs.uk/talk, or a GP can refer you.

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

If you or a loved one are experiencing a mental health crisis you can call NHS **111** and select the mental health option for 24-hour mental health advice and support. Further information and other ways to get help are available at nhs.uk/UrgentMentalHealth.

Abbie,
GP





Looking out for others

Remember older neighbours, friends and family members may need extra help during winter. Keep in touch with them, especially if they live alone.

Age UK services

Age UK offers several services to help you stay connected and supported:

The Silver Line Helpline is a free, confidential telephone service for people aged 55 and over. Whether you're feeling lonely, need help accessing support, or just want a chat, you can call **0800 470 80 90** to speak to a friendly team member 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Many local Age UKs run befriending schemes that involve friendly phone chats or volunteers visiting you at home or accompanying you to appointments. Age UK also runs a telephone friendship service that matches you with a volunteer with similar interests for a free weekly chat. You can call **0800 434 6105** to find out more.

Local Age UKs offer various clubs and activities that provide opportunities to meet new people in your area. You can also volunteer with Age UK, which is a great way to make a difference, meet new people and feel more engaged in your local community.



You can visit ageuk.org.uk or call **0800 169 6565** to find out more about how Age UK can support you.



Where to go for the right medical help

A green circular logo with the text 'nhs.uk Pharmacy GP' in white. 'nhs.uk' is at the top, 'Pharmacy' is in the middle, and 'GP' is at the bottom.

nhs.uk
Pharmacy
GP

Access NHS advice and information at **nhs.uk**

You can contact your pharmacy or GP practice



If you need urgent medical help but you're not sure where to go, use **111** to get assessed and directed to the right place for you. Go online at **111.nhs.uk**, call **111** or use the NHS App*

A red circular logo with the number '999' in white.

999

Call **999** or go to A&E in an emergency when someone is seriously ill or their life is at risk

* If you need NHS 111 in other languages call **111** and ask for an interpreter. It is also available via the NHS 111 BSL interpreter service at **111.nhs.uk** or text relay by calling **18001 111**.

This leaflet is available in alternative formats at **nhs.uk/StayWell**.
Email **england.campaigns@nhs.net** for braille copies.