

Stay safe and well in the cold weather

With sub-zero temperatures travelling is becoming difficult for many, so residents should think about how they could best access any healthcare they need. The best option may be to stay at home to recover, to visit a pharmacy for treatment, use a walk-in or urgent care centre, or to call NHS 111 for advice and signposting to a healthcare service.

More often than not self-care is the only treatment you need for minor ailments, such as headaches, colds and flu, or minor injuries like muscle pulls and strains.

The cold weather is a killer and can take its toll on your body, particularly if you are more susceptible to illness because you are elderly or have a long-term medical condition. So, we are urging the most vulnerable to take a few simple precautions to protect themselves from the cold – as it could save their life:

- Keep yourself warm in and outdoors.
- If you suffer from a long-term medical condition, are pregnant, or over 65 make sure you book an appointment to have your flu jab.
- If you take regular medications, make sure you have sufficient supplies and remedies to treat yourself when you are becoming unwell. Ensure that you have access to help and support when you may need it.
- People should think about how the bad weather may affect friends and family, particularly if they are older or very young or have pre-existing health conditions. These groups can be particularly vulnerable to the ill-effects of cold so think now what you could do to help.

It only takes a few simple measures to protect yourself and your family from winter-related illnesses and incidents. People can keep warm and healthy by following our five top tips.

1. Heat your home well by setting your heating to the right temperature (between 18-21°C). If you feel cold at night, use a hot water bottle or electric blanket – but never use both together. It is especially important if you're at home all day.

2. Eat well and have plenty of fluids. Food and water are vital sources of energy, and they help keep your body warm. Try to make sure you and your family have hot meals and drinks regularly throughout the day.

3. Get a flu jab. You can get free flu jabs to protect against seasonal flu from your GP or local pharmacy if you are over 65, pregnant, or have a long-term condition.

4. Look after yourself and others. On cold days try to avoid going outside. However, if you do need to go out, remember to wrap up warm and take care on slippery surfaces. If you have an older neighbour or relative, look out for them during the winter to make sure they are safe and well.

5. Keep your medicine cabinet well stocked. If you're on medication, make sure you get your repeat prescriptions in time so you don't run out. If you haven't already, talk to your GP practice about registering for Patient Online. Simply complete the paperwork and you'll be able to request repeat prescriptions online as well as make GP appointments. Check to

make sure you have enough over the counter remedies for coughs and colds so you don't need to leave home unless you have to.

For more winter health advice:

Visit www.nhs.uk/staywell

[Sign up](#) to the NHS Choices newsletter (see the latest example [here](#)). It's packed full of useful advice for staying healthy in cold weather.

Read [Met Office](#) advice for when travelling during heavy snow and on icy roads.

Visit the [Health A-Z section](#) on the NHS Choices website, or download Self Care Forum's [fact sheets](#) from their website for advice on how to treat minor illnesses.