

Key messages for you to support our communities keep well during winter

You can help support public services and NHS this winter by helping to share simple key messages. This will support public services and the NHS which will be under significant pressure. It makes sense to equip and empower as many people as possible to make steps to keep themselves well and to make sure they know where to find information which helps with access to appropriate services.

This document is for volunteers, community leaders, councillors, staff from community organisations and groups to use to help share important messages when you are in contact with people who are vulnerable, or likely to benefit from support from health and care services. We ask that while you are in contact with others, please share this information. Please include the following messages in all community newsletters, leaflets, social media and email it where you can to others.

There are five steps for keeping well this winter we would like you to remember and share. These are:

- 1. Stay warm**
- 2. Keep well**
- 3. Look out for others**
- 4. Look after your mental health and**
- 5. Get more information**

1. Stay 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. The cold and damp weather, ice, snow and high winds can worsen 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.

Tips to help you stay warm:

- If you can get outside for a walk during the day in winter you'll not only maintain your fitness you'll be helping to banish the winter blues. Remember to wear thin layers of cotton, wool or fleecy fibres to keep you warm.
- Stay inside in bad weather if you don't have to go out.
- If you are going outside, make sure you wear shoes with good grip and a scarf around the mouth to protect you from the cold air, and to reduce their risk of chest infections.
- If possible, try to keep your living room warm throughout the day and heat your bedroom before going to bed.
- To minimise the risks to your health, if you're not moving about as much at home and inactive for long periods you should wear warm clothing indoors and if possible, heat your home to at least 18°C (65F).
- Keep your bedroom windows closed at night.
- If you use an electric blanket always check it regularly for signs of wear or damage. Never use an electric blanket and a hot water bottle at the same time. If you're in any doubt about your blanket, contact the manufacturer before you use it to make sure that it is safe. It may need to be replaced.

2. Keep well

The NHS provide [winter health advice](#) with some simple things you can do to help yourself stay well:

Get vaccinated

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. 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.

Some people may be eligible for both the flu and the COVID-19 booster vaccines this winter. If you are offered both vaccines, it's safe to have them at the same time. Find out more about the [winter vaccinations](#) and who can get them.

Use your local pharmacy

If you, your child, or someone you care for starts to feel ill, first of all get help and advice for treating cold and flu symptoms from your local pharmacy. Pharmacists are highly trained and skilled healthcare professionals with an expert knowledge of medicines and health. They have the right training to make sure you get the help you need. Many pharmacies are easily accessible, open until late and at weekends, you don't need an appointment. Most also have a private consultation room.

Pharmacies can give treatment advice about a range of common conditions and minor injuries, such as: aches and pains, sore throat, coughs, colds, flu, earache, cystitis, skin rashes, teething, and red eye. If you want to buy an over-the-counter medicine, the pharmacist and their team can help you choose. Ask your pharmacist what medicines should be in your cabinet to help you and your family this winter. Always keep medicines out of sight and reach of children - high, lockable cupboard in a cool, dry place is ideal. Regularly check the expiry dates on a medicine - if a medicine is past its expiry date, don't use it or throw it away. Take it to your pharmacy where it can be disposed of safely.

Don't go to the emergency department unless you have an emergency

If you are in any doubt, contact 111 either by phone or online at www.111.nhs.uk to get clinical advice or direction to the most appropriate services for treatment.

Please remember to cancel any unwanted appointments

If you do have an appointment with a GP or other NHS service that you no longer need, please remember to contact the service you have your appointment with to cancel. It doesn't matter if this is only 30 minutes beforehand, NHS services are so busy they will always have someone on standby to take the appointment.

Tips to help you keep well:

- You'll naturally feel more tired during the winter, it's important to have a good night's sleep but eating your five-a-day fruit and veg will also help boost your energy levels.
- Stay as active as you can, regular exercise can help improve your physical and mental health.
- Try to stock up on food essentials such as long-life milk, tins of soup and bread in the freezer.
- Make sure you have enough medication and remember to get repeat prescriptions filled in advance during severe weather and be aware that many surgeries and pharmacies will close over the Christmas and New Year period.
- Keep in touch with friends, family and your community.

3. Look out for others

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:

- Keep an eye on elderly and vulnerable friends, relatives and neighbours who may be more susceptible to the cold weather, especially if they suffer from any ongoing medical conditions. Ask how they are keeping warm during cold weather.
- Make sure they're stocked up with enough food supplies for a few days in case they can't go out.

4. Look after your mental health

Winter can be a hard time for some people. Colder weather and darker nights may mean it's harder to get out and about and could leave you feeling isolated. [Every minds matter](#) provides advice, information, support and resources to help you manage your mental health and emotional wellbeing.

[Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Talking Therapies](#) is free to Lancashire residents and people can contact the services themselves. It offers support with a wide variety of issues. Christmas is traditionally a time when many people feel pressure to spend more than they can afford on elaborate gifts and food. Sometimes when people are in debt, they can become so worried about it that they consider taking their own lives.

For more information please visit www.lancashireandsouthcumbria.icb.nhs.uk/our-work/mental-health/support/debt-advice-and-support

5. Help and support is available

You can find a wealth of information to help look after yourself, your friends, your family and community on the NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria website. To stay healthy, prevent illness and get the right care, please visit: www.healthierlsc.co.uk/winter

Information is available on:

Community services A&E Virtual wards Pharmacy Mental health support
NHS 111 Cost of living support Optometry GP practices Urgent care
Dentistry Falls prevention Keeping safe during a hospital stay Self-care
Seasonal vaccinations and winter health Long Covid Bereavement support

Download and read the NHS Help Us Help You winter booklet. If you'd like some hard copies of the booklets for sharing in your community or using at a meeting or event, please email lscicb.communications@nhs.net to arrange collection.

Help with the rising cost of living

Blackburn with Darwen Council is working with a number of local organisations who can offer support. Visit their website at www.blackburn.gov.uk/cost-living-support to find out how they can help you including information about the Household Support Fund, food, and money and debt.

Government support with energy bills

The government is providing support to millions of people across the UK to help them with their energy bills this winter. Get suggestions on ways to save energy in your home and [get help with your energy bills](#).

The Priority Services Register

Check if you're eligible to register on your energy company's Priority Services Register, a free support service for people in vulnerable situations. For more information visit the [Ofgem website](#).

Help and support for rough sleeping and homelessness

During winter, sleeping on the streets poses even more of a risk to life than normal. There are however a number of support options for those who sleep rough, are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. If you see somebody, or know somebody, who is rough sleeping you can report this via [Streetlink](#).

For those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, you can contact Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council housing needs team on 01254 585444 between 9am and 5pm or 07739 454978 after 5pm. Homelessness advice can also be provided by [Shelter Lancashire](#) who are based at Blackburn Central Library.

Other support available includes the Phoenix Hub based at The Salvation Army, Bramwell House, Heaton St, Blackburn where people can go for advice, food, and wash facilities. The hub is open Tuesday to Thursday 9am to 2pm. Homeless people can also access advice and a hot meal at the [Community CVS VOICE](#) breakfast club on a Saturday and Sunday morning.

The warm spaces scheme via [Care Network](#) has dedicated spaces to use during the day to keep warm such as the library.

Practical tips for rough sleepers to try and protect against the cold:

- Try and find a sheltered place
- Wear layers of thin clothing, use a sleeping bag and blankets
- Avoid sleeping directly on the ground by, for example, sleeping on layers of card

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding these key messages or insight from the conversations you have, please share it with us. Please email the NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board team at: Lscicb.ice@nhs.net