UK Health Security Agency

NHS

We're here to help you stay well this winter

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

nhs.uk/StayWell

Your health matters

Help us help you

Jaza, Nurse

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 protect yourself and your family this winter. They help keep you healthy 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 if you can.

You can get the free NHS vaccine if you:

- are aged 65 or over (including those who will be 65 by 31 March 2026)

Clare, Pharmacist

- are aged 6 months to 64 years old with certain long-term health conditions
- are aged 2 to 3 years old
- are pregnant
- live in a care home
- are the main carer for an older or disabled person, or receive a carer's allowance
- live with someone who has a weakened immune system

How to book: Use the NHS App, visit **nhs.uk/BookFlu**, call 119, or contact your GP practice or pharmacy. Find pharmacies at **nhs.uk/flu-pharmacy**.

School-age children from reception to year 11 are offered the vaccine through school services.

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 old who have a weakened immune system because of a health condition or treatment
- residents in an older adult care home

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

RSV vaccine

People aged 75 to 79, as well as people who turned 80 after 1 September 2024, are eligible for a vaccine to protect against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). RSV affects the airways and lungs and can cause pneumonia, leading to thousands of hospitalisations each year. If you are in this eligible group, you only need the RSV vaccine once.

Contact your GP practice to book, or you may be able to get the vaccine at a pharmacy in some areas. The RSV vaccine should be given separately from the flu vaccine.

Pregnant women will also be offered the RSV vaccine from 28 weeks of pregnancy (for each pregnancy) to protect mum and baby.

Other vaccines

If you're aged 65 or over, or have certain health conditions, 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 vaccines. Ask your GP practice for more information.

If you're aged 70 to 79, severely immunosuppressed (and aged over 18), or turned 65 on or after 1 September 2023, you can get

Samuel, Nurse

a shingles vaccine to reduce your risk of getting the disease. Contact your GP practice to arrange this.

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**.

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.

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/NHSApp.**

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

Adebola, GP

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**.

Sheikh, 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 UK offices 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 UK offices 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.

NHS

Where to go for the right medical help

nhs.uk
Pharmacy
GP

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

You can contact your pharmacy or GP practice

111
111.nhs.uk

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*

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.