

Be Prepared

Make sure to order prescriptions in plenty of time. If you are having difficulty with a particular item being available at the local pharmacy ask for a collection only prescription which you can take to any Pharmacy.

Stay Warm

One of the best ways of keeping yourself well during winter is to stay warm.

If you have reduced mobility, are 65 or over or have a health condition such as heart or lung disease, you should heat your home to at least 18C and make sure you wear enough clothes to stay warm. It's a good idea to keep your bedroom at this temperature all night.

Winter fuel Payment

You could get between £100 and £300 tax-free to help pay your heating bills if you were born on or before 5 July 1953. This is known as a "winter-Fuel Payment", it is a yearly one-off payment to help eligible people pay for their heating in the winter, and is not linked to temperature.

See www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment.

Cold weather payment

If you receive certain benefits, and are eligible to get a Cold Weather Payment you will automatically be paid £25 for each 7 day period of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.

See www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment.

Flu

The best way to prevent getting flu is to have the flu jab (or nasal spray for children aged 2 to 18). The flu vaccine gives good protection against flu and lasts for one year.

If you are aged 65 and over or have a long term health condition such as diabetes or kidney disease, please call the surgery to make an appointment to get the vaccination.

Norovirus

Also known as the winter vomiting bug, Norovirus is an extremely infectious and unpleasant stomach bug, but it is usually over within a couple of days. When people are ill with vomiting and diarrhoea, it is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Young children and the elderly are especially at risk. Drinking oral rehydration fluid (available from pharmacies), can help.

Asthma

Cold air is a major trigger of asthma symptoms such as wheezing and shortness of breath. People with asthma should try to stay indoors on very cold windy days. If you do go out, wear a scarf over your nose and mouth. Be extra vigilant about taking your regular medication, and keep reliever inhalers close by and in a warm place.

Colds and sore throats

You can help prevent colds by washing your hands regularly. If you get a cold use disposable tissues instead of cloth handkerchiefs to avoid constantly re-infecting your own hands. Sore throats are common in winter and are mostly caused by viral infections. Gargling with warm salty water can have a soothing effect.

You don't usually need medical advice if you have a sore throat. It is advisable to see the GP if, your symptoms are severe, if your symptoms do not improve after a week, if you have a weak immune system (e.g. undergoing chemotherapy) or if you experience sore throats frequently.

Choose Pharmacy - common ailments service.

You will receive advice and free treatment from your community pharmacist for common ailments such as:- indigestion, constipation, sore throats, cold sores, eye infections, diarrhoea, hay fever, piles, athlete's foot, mouth ulcers, dermatitis, oral thrush, in-growing toenails. Contact your local pharmacy for further advice. If the pharmacist feels that it is better to see your GP or another Health Care professional they may tell you to make an appointment.

Be a good Neighbour

Please check on older neighbours or relatives to make sure they are safe.

Older people are particularly vulnerable during the winter as cold weather increases the risk of illnesses such as colds, coughs, flu, heart attacks, strokes, breathing problems and hypothermia. Ask if they have had a free flu jab and, if not offer to make an appointment at the GP surgery.

Look out for signs of serious illness, such as drowsiness, slurred speech and the person not complaining of cold even in a bitterly cold room. Make sure they're warm enough, especially at night, and have stocks of food and their regular medications.

If you are worried, ask if there's a relative or close friend that you can telephone.