

Community Pharmacy Living Well Campaign

 Public Health
Agency

 Health and
Social Care

December 2024

'Stay well this winter' campaign briefing

The 'Stay well this winter' campaign aims to help the public prepare for the winter months by encouraging them to take actions to protect their health. The campaign will run during December 2024 and January 2025.

Campaign overview

During winter a number of respiratory viruses circulate, which increases pressure on our health service. Older people and those with long-term health conditions such as heart or kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (including emphysema and chronic bronchitis), asthma or diabetes are particularly vulnerable.

The 'Stay well this winter' campaign aims to help the public prepare for the winter months by encouraging them to plan ahead and to take actions to protect themselves and to stay well. This will help reduce pressure on the health service.

Target audience

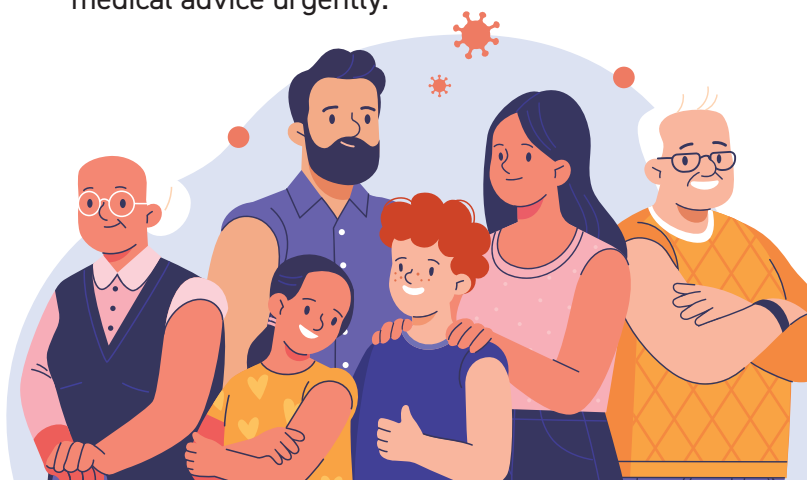
All adults, especially those aged 65 or older, people with an underlying health condition, pregnant women, and parents and guardians.

Key messages

- Getting your flu and COVID-19 vaccines, if you are eligible, are two of the most important things you can do to protect yourself and others around you this winter. For more information, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/winter-vaccines
- Those who are eligible can also get protection from other respiratory illnesses by getting the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine and the pneumococcal vaccine. For more information on the RSV vaccine, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/rsv-older-adult or www.nidirect.gov.uk/rsv-pregnancy

For the pneumococcal vaccine, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/conditions/pneumonia

- Self-care is often the best choice to treat minor illnesses.
- Pharmacists are qualified to give advice about different health matters, including minor illnesses, so consider speaking to a pharmacist before going to your GP.
- Make sure you order any prescription medicines and collect them before your GP practice and pharmacy close for any bank holidays.
- If you are feeling unwell, antibiotics are not always needed. You should take your GP or pharmacist's advice and only take antibiotics when you need them.
- Washing your hands with soap and water is one of the easiest ways to protect yourself and others from catching many viruses.
- It's important to keep warm in winter – both inside and outdoors.
- Regular exercise can help improve your physical and mental health, reduce the risk of falls and can be beneficial for recovery if you do get ill.
- Look out for others such as older family members, friends or neighbours, who may need a bit of extra help over the winter.
- Be aware of the signs of serious illness and seek medical advice urgently.



Campaign materials

Copies of the following materials are enclosed:

1 x A1 poster

Your pharmacist can help you stay well this winter



1 x A3 poster

You can help yourself stay well this winter



1 x A3 poster

Your pharmacist can help you stay well this winter



A5 leaflet

Stay well this winter

Pharmacies should display the posters and leaflets in the pharmacy within a designated health promotion display area. Posters can be rotated over the two month period, but if space permits within the pharmacy all posters may be displayed at the same time. Pharmacies must show a poster in at least one window unit for the full duration of the campaign.

Social media

For pharmacies using social media channels, there is an opportunity to let followers know the pharmacy is involved in the campaign and to promote the campaign messages. Tag the Public Health Agency (PHA), Health and Social Care NI, Community Pharmacy NI and NI Centre for Pharmacy Learning & Development (NICPLD) in your posts and follow the PHA's social media accounts. Please include the hashtags #LivingWell, #StayWellThisWinter and #WinterVaccines (if appropriate) on social media posts for this campaign.



X:

@publichealthni
@HSC_NI
@compharmacyni
@NICPLD1



Facebook:

@publichealthagency
@healthandsocialcareni
@communitypharmacyni
@NICPLD



Instagram:

@publichealthni
@health_and_social_care
@compharmacyni
@NICPLD1

All Living Well materials to support this campaign can be found at <https://bso.hscni.net/living-well>

Campaign activities

- The *Stay well this winter* leaflet can be handed out to those attending the pharmacy, with prescriptions, and to people buying over-the-counter medicines or enquiring about medicines for common winter ailments.
- Encourage people who are eligible for winter vaccines, especially the flu and COVID-19 vaccines, to get vaccinated. Advise if the pharmacy provides the flu vaccine or COVID-19 vaccine or both and explain to patients how they can book an appointment, to get vaccinated.
- Promote self-care to patients, giving them the confidence to treat themselves at home. It is important patients are aware of the duration of their illness and when to seek help if their condition does not improve. Factsheets on lots of common winter illnesses are available at www.selfcareforum.org/fact-sheets You may wish to print out relevant factsheets and hand them out to patients as appropriate.

- You may wish to run an in-store demonstration for good hand hygiene. The leaflet *Hand hygiene* provides helpful advice and a walk-through example of hand hygiene using soap and water and also hand sanitiser. The leaflet is available at www.pha.site/hand-hygiene



- This year marks the 10 year anniversary of the Antibiotic Guardian initiative. You may wish to appoint a staff member to be the Antibiotic Guardian champion for your pharmacy and encourage patients to become Antibiotic Guardians. More information can be found at www.antibioticguardian.com



ANTIBIOTIC GUARDIAN

Keep **Antibiotics** Working

Cough in adults

SELF-CARE FORUM FACT SHEET NO. 7

This fact sheet helps you know what is normal and what you can expect to happen if you develop a cough. It also tells you when you should become concerned and seek advice from a health professional.

Useful facts

What causes coughs?

A sudden cough is most commonly caused by a virus infection in connection with a cold or flu.

A longer-lasting cough is more common in smokers and people with underlying lung problems such as asthma, and in those with allergies such as hay fever.

Coughs can also be caused by COVID-19 or bacterial chest infections. Other conditions such as heartburn (gastric reflux) as well as certain medicines or dusty workplaces can also make you cough. Rarely a cough is a sign of something serious like lung cancer.

Frequency

Many adults get a respiratory infection between 2-5 times a year.

What can I expect to happen?

Coughs are usually harmless

Although a cough can be distressing (both for yourself and others living or working with you), acute coughs tend to be harmless and usually improve within three weeks.

Duration

Coughs usually last up to three weeks but can last for up to eight weeks. Coughs can be dry or may come with a thick mucus (phlegm).

Training and professional development

NICPLD has a number of eLearning courses available at www.nicpld.org/url/elearning

- Respiratory and Ears, eyes and oral health available under the Minor Ailments section.
- Common infections available under the Antimicrobials section.

Further support and signposting

Treat Antibiotics Responsibly, Guidance, Education and Tools (TARGET) has a useful toolkit produced by the UK Health Security Agency in collaboration with the Royal College of General Practitioners. It includes resources that can be used to support prescribers and patients with responsible antibiotic use as well as self-care information. It can be accessed at <https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/course/view.php?id=553>

Questions and answers

Q: I am eligible for the flu and/or COVID-19 vaccine/s. I've had the vaccine/s before. Why do I need to get it/them again?

A: It's important to get the flu and/or COVID-19 vaccine/s if you are eligible because viruses change and protection fades over time. Getting the vaccine/s will top up your protection.

Q: I heard the flu vaccine protects you from getting COVID-19. Is that true?

A: No. The flu vaccine only protects against flu. It does not protect you against COVID-19. If you are eligible for the flu and COVID-19 vaccine, getting both will offer you the best protection.

Q: I heard the flu/COVID-19 vaccines can give you flu/COVID-19. Is that true?

A: No. The flu/COVID-19 vaccine/s cannot give you flu/COVID-19 infections.

Q: Is it safe to get both the flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time?

A: Yes. It is safe to get both vaccines in a single appointment and getting them together will not lessen the efficacy of either vaccine. You'll get the same level of protection that you would from getting the vaccines in two separate appointments.

Q: I'm eligible for three vaccines – flu, COVID-19 and RSV. Can I get the RSV vaccine with both the flu and COVID-19 vaccines?

A: It is recommended that the RSV vaccination is done on a different day to the other two.

Q: Can you still catch flu/COVID-19 after getting the vaccine/s?

A: Yes. No vaccine is 100% effective. Some people may get flu/COVID-19 even if they have been vaccinated, but it is likely to be a milder infection than if they had not been vaccinated.

Q: I have recently had flu/COVID-19. Should I still get the vaccine?

A: Even if you think you have had flu or COVID-19, getting the vaccine can still help protect you. It is best to wait until you feel well before receiving the vaccine. You should not attend a vaccine appointment if you think you could be infectious to others.

Q: I spoke to my GP as I have a cold but I didn't get an antibiotic. Why not?

A: Antibiotics do not treat viral infections. Colds and flu are caused by viruses. The campaign leaflet shows how long common illnesses last and when you should start to feel better. It also provides advice as to when you should seek help if your symptoms do not improve with self-care.

Signposting for patients

- For flu and COVID-19 vaccination programmes, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/winter-vaccines
- For the RSV vaccine, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/rsv-older-adult or www.nidirect.gov.uk/rsv-pregnancy
- For the pneumococcal vaccine, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/conditions/pneumonia
- Leaflets on vaccines can be found by searching the Publications section of the PHA website. See www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications
- For antimicrobial resistance and antibiotic use, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/antibiotic-resistance



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Find us on:

