

Advice on staying well during cold and flu season

With flu levels having risen in recent weeks and many of us experiencing coughs and colds, there is some simple advice to get through winter. Everyone is reminded that hand hygiene and self-care are essential when preventing and managing colds and flu.

Advice if you're unwell

[Washing your hands](#) regularly will help prevent flu and other winter viruses spreading.

If you do become unwell with [flu](#) or flu-like symptoms, you should stay at home. Most cases of flu are likely to be mild and can be managed at home with over-the-counter medication from a [pharmacist](#).

You should:

- rest up
- drink plenty of fluids
- blow your nose – catch it, bin it, kill it
- wash hands regularly
- clean hard surfaces (such as door handles) frequently using your usual cleaning product

For most people it will have got better within a week – if not you should speak to [your GP](#).

Those in [‘at-risk’ groups](#) may be more likely to get a serious illness. They should contact their GP earlier for advice if they have a high temperature or shortness of breath.

Antibiotics

It's important to remember that a course of [antibiotics won't sort out your cold or flu](#). Cold and flu are viruses and antibiotics are useless against them.

Viral infections are very common and, as well as cold and flu, they can include many infections of the nose, sinuses, ears, throat and chest.

Most of these can be self-treated without the need for a visit to the doctor, and with no need for an antibiotic.

Get the flu vaccine

Getting the [free flu vaccine](#) is the single most important thing you can do to help protect yourself against flu.

Everyone who is eligible to be vaccinated against flu should see it as a positive step in protecting their health and the health of others around them.

Further information on how to help yourself stay well this winter is in the [stay well section](#).

More useful links

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