

Think about giving blood

Date published: 09 January 2019

Have you considered donating blood? Each week around 500 people in Northern Ireland need a life-saving blood transfusion. It only takes 45 minutes to give blood and 150 new blood donors are needed each week.

Blood donation is vital

Blood donation is vital for the delivery of healthcare, and it saves and enhances lives. Most of us know someone who has benefited from donated blood through emergency surgery, for routine operations, in the treatment of cancer, or childbirth.

Only six per cent of Northern Ireland's population currently give blood. That leaves 94 per cent of those eligible who do not. All eligible people are encouraged to consider becoming a blood donor.

There are almost 800 blood donation sessions a year at around 240 locations throughout Northern Ireland.

If you are between the age of 17 and 65 and in reasonably good health you should be able to give blood for the first time .

You can find out more, including how to become a donor, from the [Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service](#).

More useful links

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Play a part in making roads safer

Date published: 02 January 2019

We can all play a part in reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries on the roads. The majority of road deaths are down to human error, including poor road user behaviour, and therefore are preventable.

Personal responsibility

Every day and every journey brings with it a new risk and we need to be on our guard at all times.

We all have to behave responsibly as we share the road – for our own safety, the safety of our passengers and that of other road users.

It is our actions that make a difference, such as:

- slowing down
- always paying attention
- never driving after drinking or taking drugs
- ignoring the mobile phone
- looking out for those who [walk, cycle or ride a motorcycle](#) as they are more vulnerable
- always wearing a seatbelt, no matter how short the journey

You can get more road safety advice at the following link:

Together our actions can make a difference and help prevent deaths or serious injuries on the roads.

More useful links

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[Heavy rain and strong winds warning – advice and information](#)

With a weather warning for heavy rain and strong winds in place, there could be travel delays, difficult driving conditions, localised flooding, larger

waves on coastal areas, power cuts, fallen trees, and risk of flying debris. It might be useful to take note of the Flooding Incident Line number – 0300 2000 100.

Weather warning

The Met Office has sent out a [weather warning for heavy rain and strong winds](#).

Weather warnings let the public and emergency services know about potentially hazardous conditions.

You can find out more about weather warnings on [the Met Office website](#).

Emergency numbers

You should note the following numbers in case of emergency:

- Emergency services – 999 or 112
- Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100
- Northern Ireland Electricity Networks – 03457 643 643
- NI Gas Emergency Service – 0800 002 001
- Northern Ireland Water Waterline – 03457 440 088
- Housing Executive – 03448 920 901

There is also information about emergencies at this link:

Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100

The Flooding Incident Line is available 24 hours a day, every day. You can report flooding problems on roads or burst water mains and blocked drains.

When you ring the flooding incident line, a member of staff will:

- take all your details
- contact the appropriate agency on your behalf

This is a non emergency number, so if you are in danger, call the emergency services on 999.

You can get more information about flooding at the following link:

Strong winds advice

You can get information about how to prepare for strong winds, including what to do if your power is off and other useful advice, on the following page:

Report a fallen tree or blocked road

You can report a fallen tree or blocked road at the following link:

Roads information

If there are any problems on the roads as a result of the weather you can get the latest updates on the [TrafficwatchNI website](#).

Public transport

For the latest information on bus and train services, go to the 'Travel update' section on the [Translink website](#).

Forests, country parks and nature reserves

You're advised not to visit forests, [country parks](#) and [nature reserves](#) until the weather warning is over due to the increased risks of fallen trees, branches and debris.

Preparing for a flood

To help reduce the impact of flooding on your home, you should:

- have some sandbags or floodboards or plastic covers prepared to block doorways and airbricks
- know where to turn off your electricity and/ or gas
- move your valuable possessions to safety
- ensure your insurance provides cover against flood damage to property
- keep a list of useful contact numbers such as your local council, emergency services and your insurance company

You can get more details on the [preparing for a flood](#) page.

Driving and walking in flooded areas

You should always plan your journey and check the latest weather and travel advice.

Do not travel in heavy rainstorms unless absolutely necessary.

In flooded areas, drivers should not:

- enter flood water that is moving or is more than four inches deep
- under any circumstances, drive through fast-flowing water as the car could be swept away

In more shallow but passable water:

- slow down
- avoid creating bow waves which can damage your car engine; and
- remember to test the brakes after leaving the water

Do not attempt to walk through flooded areas. Even shallow water moving fast can sweep you off your feet and there may be hidden dangers such as:

- open drains
- damaged road surfaces
- submerged debris; or
- deep channels which can result in serious injury or, in the worst cases, death

If you do become stranded in flood water and you feel there is a risk to life, dial 999 for emergency assistance.

Insurance claims after a flood

If you are going to report flood damage to your insurance company there are certain things to remember. You should keep a record of the flood damage and any contact you have with the insurance company.

If you have different insurers for the structure of your home and your content, make sure you contact them both.

If you live in rented accommodation, the landlord will deal with the structure of your home. For content claims, contact your own insurer.

You can find out more at this page:

Risks related to flooding

Be aware of hidden dangers under the water, such as missing manhole covers, and guard against the possibility of falling into fast-flowing water.

The risk of becoming ill after contact with flood water is generally low. However, as it is not always clear whether flood water is contaminated, you should assume that it is and take appropriate precautions.

Preventing health problems

There are a number of things you can do to prevent health problems if your home floods:

- wherever possible try to avoid coming into direct contact with floodwater
- do not let children play in floodwater
- use rubber gloves when cleaning up
- wash hands after being in contact with flood water, sewage or anything contaminated by these
- wash children's hands regularly
- clean toys that have been in flood water with disinfectant
- cover cuts or open sores
- don't eat any food that has been in contact with floodwater
- clean all surfaces with disinfectant before any food is placed on them

Contact your GP if you, or someone you know, develops a stomach upset following flooding.

More useful links

Reducing the risk of sudden infant death

Date published: 12 April 2019

Parents and carers are being reminded that there are measures which can be taken to reduce the risk of sudden infant death. If your baby becomes unwell, seek medical advice quickly.

Simple measures to take

Sudden infant death is rare but it's important to follow a few simple measures to help reduce the risk. These include:

- put your baby on its back to sleep, in a cot or Moses basket in a room with you for the first six months
- put your baby with their feet touching the foot of the cot, to prevent your baby wriggling down under the covers
- use a light blanket firmly tucked no higher than the baby's shoulders and a clean, firm, well-fitting mattress
- if using a baby sleeping bag make sure it's fitted with neck and arm holes and doesn't have a hood
- don't put pillows, loose blankets, cot bumpers or sleep positioners in your baby's cot
- don't smoke in pregnancy or let anyone smoke in the same room as your baby
- don't share or allow anyone to share a bed with your baby, especially if you/ they have been drinking alcohol, have taken medication or drugs, are a smoker, or feel very sleepy
- never sleep with your baby on a sofa or armchair
- don't cover your baby's head
- don't allow your baby to become overheated
- don't leave your baby sleeping in a car seat for long periods or when not travelling in the car
- never allow your baby to sleep alone in an adult bed
- breastfeed if you can and put your baby back to sleep in their cot after feeding

You can get further information on the following page:

If you have any questions, no matter how small or trivial you might think

they are, talk your health visitor who can provide practical advice.

More useful links

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[Advice if buying a puppy](#)

Date published: 03 December 2018

Thinking of buying a puppy? You can get information and advice on what you should and shouldn't do. Make sure you're ready to care for a dog for the whole of its life.

Tips and advice

There are things to consider when buying a puppy, including:

- dogs can live for up to 13 years and beyond, so it's a long-term commitment
- do not buy a puppy from a roadside or meeting point
- the puppy must be more than eight weeks old
- see the puppy with its mother
- make sure the puppy is [microchipped](#) before buying
- ask for a veterinary record of initial vaccinations
- ask how the puppy has been socialised to make sure it is prepared for the world around it
- buy a [dog licence](#) from your local council (it's an offence to keep a dog without having a licence to keep it)

Illegally-bred puppies often have health conditions, behaviour problems, and infections and diseases. This can result in huge vet bills, a short and miserable life for the puppy, and heartache for you and your family.

Also, beware unknowingly paying for one which has come from outside the UK and has not been properly vaccinated.

You can find out more on the following page:

Dog welfare

It's an offence for anyone who's responsible for a dog to fail to make sure that the needs of the dog are met.

The penalty for this offence is up to six months imprisonment and/ or a fine of up to £5,000.

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