

Winter Health Guide

Health and wellbeing advice for you and your family this winter



www.hertfordshire.gov.uk

www.nhs.uk



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Get email updates
Update me

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Update me

For the latest health and wellbeing information in Hertfordshire, including updates about COVID-19 visit www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/updateme and select the topic 'Your health and wellbeing'.



This publication is paid for by UK government coronavirus (COVID-19) funding.

Information in this guide was correct at time of printing on 29 October 2021. To request this in an alternative format email corporate.communications@hertfordshire.gov.uk or call 0300 123 4040.

Welcome

The pandemic has had a monumental effect on all of our lives over the last 20 months, throwing into focus the importance of looking after our health and wellbeing.

Now, more than ever as we move into winter, it is vital to prioritise our health – to do all we can to protect ourselves and each other from COVID-19 and other illnesses, and to make healthy choices, so we all have the best opportunity to live life well.

We are all too aware of the lasting impact that COVID-19 has had on our county, especially on those who have been hit hardest due to the health, social or financial issues caused by the pandemic.

Through our work to ensure Hertfordshire's recovery, we are working to address the issues that matter most, ensuring everyone who needs it has access to physical



and mental health support, regardless of who you are or where you live.

We have worked closely with our partners in the NHS to produce this guide. It contains information on how to keep yourself active and well, and important advice on what you can do and who to contact if you feel unwell. It is also a useful starting point in finding out more about the wider variety of support and services on offer in Hertfordshire, and how you can benefit.

Richard Roberts
Leader of Hertfordshire
County Council



PLAY YOUR PART

I still meet my friends outside because it's safer

COVID-19 is here to stay
Let's keep life moving – remain vigilant, boost immunity and be kind

-  Hands
-  Face
-  Space
-  Fresh air

-  Get tested and self-isolate if required
-  Get vaccinated when it's your turn

Thank you for playing your part

A message from Jim McManus, Hertfordshire's Director of Public Health

“ I'd like to personally thank everyone in Hertfordshire for playing their part to protect each other.

We must, however, still be cautious as we head into winter. We're not asking people to stop living their lives, just to take the few simple precautions outlined above and opposite.

We know there is a lot of false information circulating which

means that it can become confusing for people and it's difficult to know who to trust.

But none of us want to be responsible for passing COVID-19 on to someone who could get seriously ill.

Following these measures and the latest government advice is the best thing you can do to help protect yourself and your loved ones. ”

Keep yourself and others well

Follow these steps to help stop the spread of germs.





Have you had your COVID-19 vaccinations yet?

One of the most important ways you can protect yourself and others against COVID-19 is to get your vaccinations.

Anyone over the age of 16 can walk into a drop-in clinic, no appointment is needed and you don't need to be registered with a GP. Find a date and time at: [covid.healthierfuture.org.uk](https://www.covid.healthierfuture.org.uk)

You can also book an appointment at a vaccination centre or pharmacy at: www.nhs.uk/covidvaccine or call 119.

Over 12s have been sent information via schools and local health partners about how to book an appointment if they did not receive their vaccination at school.

COVID-19 booster vaccination

A COVID-19 booster vaccine dose helps improve the protection you have from your first two doses of the vaccine, giving you longer-term protection against getting seriously ill from COVID-19.

The booster is currently being offered to at risk people, and those living with or working to support them, who had their second dose of the vaccine at least six months ago.

Once eligible, you can drop-in or book locally, visit: [covid.healthierfuture.org.uk](https://www.covid.healthierfuture.org.uk)

Protect yourself and your loved ones from flu

It's easy to pass on flu viruses without knowing.

The flu vaccine is a safe and effective vaccine. Every year millions of people, including children and those at risk, get this seasonal vaccine to help protect them from getting seriously ill from flu.

Why should I get a flu jab?

- More people are likely to get ill from flu this winter as fewer people built up natural immunity to it last year.
- If you get flu and COVID-19 at the same time, research shows you're more likely to be seriously ill.
- Getting vaccinated against flu provides protection for you and those around you.

Some people will be invited to have both flu and COVID-19 booster vaccines. If you are offered both vaccines, it's safe to have them at the same time or at different times.

Find out more about winter vaccinations, including who can get one for free at:
www.nhs.uk/wintervaccinations



Take regular tests

Around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms but can still infect others, even if they have been vaccinated.

Rapid (Lateral Flow) tests are more than 80 per cent effective at detecting COVID-19 in people with no symptoms. They give results in 30 minutes and are currently available free of charge.

You can take a rapid test in your own home, but if you need help you can be tested at a participating local pharmacy.

If you test positive, self-isolate immediately and take a PCR test to confirm the result. You should also do this if you have any COVID-19 symptoms.

Self-isolation

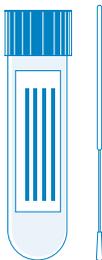
Self-isolation means you must not leave the house except in an emergency.

Support with shopping, collecting medication, dog-walking and other essential tasks is available to help you.

You may also be entitled to financial help.

For help to self-isolate, contact **HertsHelp** (see back page for contact details).

Got COVID-19 symptoms?



Take a PCR test

Find out more about COVID-19 tests and where your local test site is at:

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/covidtesting

No COVID-19 symptoms?



Take regular rapid tests

Support for long-term effects of COVID-19 (long COVID)

For some people, COVID-19 can cause symptoms that last weeks or months after the infection has gone. This is sometimes called post-COVID-19 syndrome or “long COVID”.

There are many symptoms that could be a sign of long COVID, including breathing issues, tiredness, poor sleep, trouble remembering or concentrating, a loss of sense of taste or smell and others.

Lasting symptoms should get better over time. Contact a GP if you're worried about symptoms

four weeks or more after having COVID-19. If you have long COVID you may be referred to local support to help you manage your symptoms while you recover.

Visit: **www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk** for more information.





How your pharmacist can help you

Heading to a local pharmacy is an easy way to get help from a health professional.

Pharmacists are experts in medicines who are also trained in helping people to manage minor illnesses. They can offer clinical advice and sell affordable medicines to treat a range of illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats and aches and pains.

If symptoms suggest something more serious, pharmacists have the right training to direct you to the help you need.

They can answer questions about your prescription medicines. Remember to order repeat prescription requests

from your GP surgery several days before you run out so that your prescription is ready when you need it.

Did you know?

Many pharmacies are open until late and at weekends. Visit: **www.nhs.uk** for help to find your nearest one.

There are around 200 pharmacies across Hertfordshire and most have a private consultation room. If your pharmacy doesn't have one, they will be able to direct you to one that does.

Urgent health need? Think 111 first

The NHS 111 service helps you receive the right care, from the right person, in the right place, at the right time.

You can visit **www.111.nhs.uk** or call 111 to be assessed and directed to a wide range of services locally.

NHS 111 can also book you an appointment with your own GP, or arrange for you to get an ambulance if you need one.

The online system and advisers have all the healthcare service information within the local community at their fingertips, and know the best place for you,

or the person you are calling on behalf of, to receive care.

You can also use the NHS 111 service for help with your mental health - call and select option 2 to be put straight through to someone who can advise you.

For less urgent health needs during normal opening hours, you should still contact your GP or visit or talk to your local pharmacist.



Children's breathing illnesses

This winter the NHS expects to see an increase in coughs and colds in young children who haven't built up much natural immunity during the year.

Winter viruses which cause coughs and colds can lead to **bronchiolitis** - an infection in the airways.

These viruses can be more severe in:

- premature babies
- babies aged under two months
- infants with conditions that make them more vulnerable to illnesses.

Most cases of bronchiolitis are not serious and clear up within two to three weeks. Early symptoms of bronchiolitis are similar to those of a common cold, such as a runny nose and a cough.

Further symptoms can develop over the next few days, and may include: higher temperature (fever), a dry and persistent cough, difficulty feeding, rapid or noisy breathing (wheezing).

You should contact your GP or call NHS 111 if:

- you're worried about your child
- your baby has taken less than half their usual amount during the last two or three feeds, or they have had a dry nappy for 12 hours or more
- your child has a persistent high temperature of 38°C or above
- your child seems very tired or irritable.

Dial 999 for an ambulance for your baby if:

- they are having difficulty breathing
- their tongue or lips are blue
- there are long pauses in their breathing.

If your child has bronchiolitis symptoms, please try to keep them away from other people who may be at risk of getting ill.

Here to help

Your local GP practice is still here to support you and your family.

Visiting your local GP surgery might feel a little bit different at the moment, but rest assured, you can still get the help you need.

Please phone or go online to contact your surgery first rather than just popping in. Someone from the surgery will get back in touch. If you do need to be seen face-to-face, practice staff

will make sure your appointment is safe for you. If it's appropriate, your appointment may be over the phone or online.

Many practices are now working together to ensure you can get an appointment when you need one. This might not be at your usual practice, but it will still be with the best person to support your needs.

 As local family doctors, we want you to know that the NHS is always here to help.

It may be that you have an appointment with a pharmacist, paramedic, nurse, GP or another specialist. Your NHS is here to support you if you need us. 



**Dr Prag Moodley and Dr Nicolas Small,
Chairs of the Hertfordshire Clinical
Commissioning Groups**

Get winter ready

Here are our top 10 tips to help you stay safe and well this winter



Eat a balanced diet and stay hydrated

Good nutrition is vital to help keep us healthy and well. Eat meals with a mix of protein, dairy, carbohydrates, fruit and **vegetables**. Drink lots of **water** (and **warm drinks** or **soup** in cold weather) and try not to exceed recommended alcohol limits.



Boost your vitamin levels

Get outside in the **sunshine** for **15-20 minutes** a day and take a **vitamin D** supplement to avoid vitamin D deficiency.



Sleep well

Establish a **bedtime routine** and use relaxation exercises to improve sleep.



Keep a well-stocked medicine cabinet

You can buy useful remedies for lots of minor illnesses from your **local pharmacist** or supermarket, often at very little cost. Own-brand versions are often cheaper but just as effective.



Stay active

30 minutes a day, including strengthening exercises, can help you to stay strong and independent.

Hertfordshire's countywide **health walks** are a free, fun and sociable way to be active. You can also search for local **activities** and **online classes** at: www.movingmore.co.uk



Keep warm

Heat your home to at least **18 degrees** – if you can't heat the whole house, heat the room you are in. Help to carry out energy efficiency improvements may be available.



Keep your home safe

Check your home

for trip hazards or electrical concerns and make sure you have a **working smoke alarm** - a **free Safe and Well** visit can help with this (see page 21 for details).



Be prepared

If you have a **car**, keep it '**winter ready**' with an emergency kit in the boot. Keep a few extra store cupboard items i.e. **tins and long-life milk** at home, in case you can't get out for a few days.



Prevent falls

Move around regularly

and use gentle exercises to stay strong and supple. Wear **slip-resistant shoes** with good grip and replace worn slippers. **Secure rugs and mats** and move obstacles.

There's lots of information to help prevent falls at: **www.hcpastopfalls.info**, including a useful app that can be downloaded onto a smart phone or tablet (ask someone to help you do this if you need to).



Stay connected

Keep in touch with people, keep a list of useful contacts in or by your phone in case of emergencies and please **look out for friends and neighbours**. There are many good neighbour schemes across the county. See page 23 for more information on staying connected.

Further information and support on these tips and more is available from HertsHelp (see back page for contact details).

Financial help

No one should be hungry or cold this winter.

If you need help paying the bills, are worried about the cost of food or cannot afford to heat your home, you may be able to get support.

The government has provided funding, including the Household Support Fund, to help those most in need to recover following the pandemic, whether you live alone, with others or have children.

The county council has agreed to use some of this money to provide supermarket vouchers during the Christmas, February half-term and Easter 2021/22 school holidays to families eligible for benefit-related free school meals.

These can also be used for food, warm clothing, blankets and household essentials. If you are eligible, you'll be contacted by your child's education setting.

Check eligibility and apply at:
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals



Contact **HertsHelp** (see back page for contact details) for further information and advice. They may also be able to offer practical help with food, energy bills, emotional support and wellbeing.

Sources of financial advice

Citizens Advice Service:

www.hcas.org.uk

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/energy

0800 144 8848

National debtline:

www.nationaldebtline.org

0808 808 4000

Support for your family

Hertfordshire's Family Centre Service supports families with children and young people aged up to 19.

Whether you are pregnant, a new parent looking for health visiting or breastfeeding support, need help finding childcare or just want to know what support is available for children and teens, your local Family Centre can help.

They can also help if you want to find services for young people aged up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) through their SEND Champions.

For more information visit:
www.hertsfamilycentres.org
or call **0300 123 7572**.

Hertfordshire Local Offer

The Local Offer lets parents, carers and young people know what SEND services are available in Hertfordshire, and who can access them. You can also sign up for regular updates, visit: **www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/SEND**



Are you one of Hertfordshire's 100,000 family carers?

If you are an unpaid family carer providing vital support to a loved one in Hertfordshire, we are on hand to try and make life a little easier.

Whether it's making sure you are getting all the financial help you are entitled to, helping you get a break from caring, looking into employment and learning opportunities, planning for the future or even how to get

support as a young carer – help is at hand.

To find out more, contact
Carers in Hertfordshire
on **01992 586969** or visit:
www.carersinherts.org.uk

“ It's especially important this year that us carers look after our health and get our winter jobs, as the people we care for still need us.

Getting the right support can make all the difference.”

Heather Good
pictured here with
her husband **Phil**





Meals on wheels... and more

Did you know that you can receive hot, nutritious meals delivered straight to your door 365 days a year from Hertfordshire Independent Living Service (HILS)?

That isn't all - from nutrition and wellbeing support, to medication prompts and an in-home exercise programme, HILS provides a wide range of support services to older and vulnerable people, helping them stay happy, healthy, and independent at home.

Mrs Gentle from Ware (pictured above) receives meals on wheels from HILS and is really pleased with the service.

“For someone like me who is living alone, it's ideal because often I don't feel like cooking, so it's great knowing I have a hot meal coming every day.”

Mrs Gentle

Find out how HILS can help you or a loved one and get a quote at:

www.hertsindependentliving.org
or call **0330 2000 103**.

Do you need help to use a computer or smart phone?

There's a lot of support available in Hertfordshire to give you the skills you need to get online.

Your local library is a good place to start. You can book an hour on a computer (free to members) and staff are on hand to help you.

You can also build your confidence with technology with the help of a volunteer digital champion like Bernice (pictured), who is helping people learn how to stay connected online.



If you or someone you know needs help to get online, contact **HertsHelp** (see back page for contact details) or contact your local library.

Visit: **www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/libraries** or call **0300 123 4049**.

Protect yourself from scams and fraud

Criminals are experts at impersonating people and organisations.

Scam crimes come in many forms, including emails, on Facebook and other social media, through the post, phone calls, text messages or in person at your door.

To find out what to look out for, visit **www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/scams** or sign up for email alerts from Hertfordshire Constabulary: **www.owl.co.uk/herts**

If you need help, contact Citizens Advice on **0808 250 5050** or visit: **www.citizensadvice.org.uk**

Stay safe at home

Did you know you can book a free Safe and Well visit to have your home checked for hazards and get advice about fire safety?

You can also get guidance on staying healthy and active, including how to prevent falls.

The appointment lasts no more than an hour and the friendly staff will give you the advice you need to keep your home safe.

They will also make sure your smoke alarms are working

properly and fit a new one for free if required.

For more information, visit:
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/safeandwell or contact
HertsHelp (see back page for contact details).



Mental health is just as important as physical health

For many people, winter can be a very isolating time.

If you would like some practical tips and advice about ways to boost your mood, to help you cope and feel more in control, then please visit: **www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters**

Many people are feeling a little lonely and disconnected right now. There are local organisations who can help, contact **HertsHelp** (see back page for contact details).

If you need help but are unable to talk to someone you trust, such as a friend or family

member, please call **0800 6444 101** or email: **hpft.spa@nhs.net** (Mon-Fri 7am-7pm). Alternatively call NHS 111 and select **option 2**.

Support for children and young people

Resources and advice to help young people manage their emotional wellbeing are available at:

www.justtalkherts.org
or follow **@JustTalkHerts** on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram

Are you experiencing domestic abuse?

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing domestic abuse, such as violence or controlling behaviour, then advice, support and services are available.

Contact Hertfordshire's Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy service on **0300 790 6772** or visit: **www.hertssunflower.org**

In an emergency, always call **999**. If you are unable or afraid to speak, press **5**, followed by **5** again when prompted.



Support in your community

Keeping active and connected can increase our sense of belonging, which in turn improves wellbeing.

‘Social prescribing’ is a free service which helps you find enjoyable activities in your local area.

It might be an old hobby, trying something new, volunteering, or a chance to learn or get fitter; it’s up to you, you’ll be in charge.

All GP practices in Hertfordshire have access to a ‘social prescribing’ link worker, who can talk to you about what makes you tick and help you with things you enjoy.

Your Healthy Hub

There is a free local Healthy Hub in each district, with friendly staff who will help you find the right advice and support to stay healthy and well; from looking after your mental health or stopping smoking to managing your weight or simply being more active.

Visit: **www.healthyhubs.org.uk**
or contact **HertsHelp** (see back page for contact details).

For advice on any of the information in this booklet, or if you're not sure where to go for help, contact HertsHelp



We're here to listen and help you find the independent support, guidance and information you need to get the most out of life.

Call us on **0300 123 4044**
email **info@hertshelp.net**
or visit: **www.hertshelp.net**



JUST THINK 111 FIRST



NHS 111

Visit: **www.111.nhs.uk**

Call: **111**

Text relay:

Call **18001 111** using text relay,
24 hours a day.

British sign language (BSL):
Use **interpreternow.co.uk/nhs111**

Need help in other languages?
Call **111** and ask for an interpreter

Mental health support:
Call **111** and select option **2**

In an emergency, always dial 999