



Winter health advice for older people

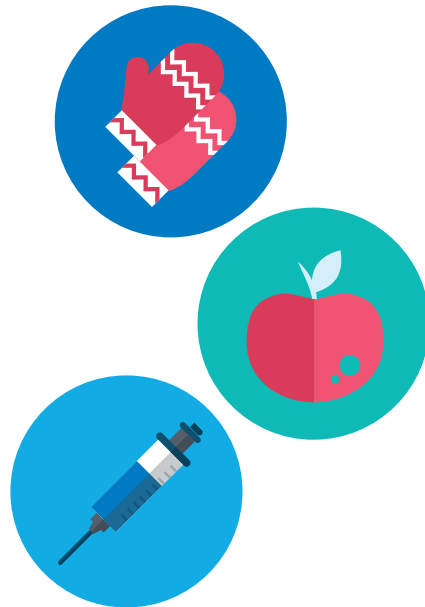
Here are some simple things you can do to stay well this winter



Keep warm to help prevent colds, flu or more serious health conditions such as heart attacks, strokes and pneumonia. Wear lots of thin layers – clothes made from cotton, wool or fleecy fibres are particularly good.

Eat well and try to have regular hot meals and drinks throughout the day to give you energy and help keep you warm. Soups are very good.

Get a free flu jab to ensure you are protected against catching flu and developing more serious complications. Ask your GP or pharmacist.



Common winter illnesses

Colds – Drink plenty of fluids and try to rest. Vapour rubs can also help. Prevent colds from spreading by washing your hands thoroughly, cleaning surfaces regularly and always sneeze and cough into tissues, throwing them away after use.

Sore throats – A sore throat is almost always caused by a viral infection, such as a cold. Try not to eat or drink anything that's too hot, as this could make it worse. Cool or warm drinks and cool, soft foods should go down easier.

Asthma – A range of weather-related things can set off asthma symptoms, including cold air. Covering your nose and mouth with a warm scarf when you're out can help.

Norovirus – Also known as the winter vomiting bug, although it can also cause diarrhoea. Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and take paracetamol for any aches, pains or fever. If it lasts more than 48 hours ring 111.

Flu – If you're over 65 or have a long-term health condition such as diabetes or kidney disease, flu can be life-threatening, so it's important to get your free jab or see help early. However, if you're generally fit and healthy, the best treatment is to rest, stay warm and drink plenty of water.



Falls

Older people are more likely to have a fall and there is a serious risk for older people who do fall. There are some simple things you can do to prevent a fall. These include:

- Ask for a 'home hazard assessment' from your GP where a healthcare professional visits you to identify potential hazards and offer advice
- Use non-slip mats in the bathroom
- Mop up spills to avoid wet floors
- Get help lifting or moving items that are heavy or difficult to lift
- Remove clutter and make sure that all areas of the home are properly lit
- Exercise regularly to improve your strength and balance
- Test your balance. Your GP can carry out some simple tests to check your balance and review any medications you are taking that may increase your risk of falling
- Have a sight test if you are having problems with your vision.

If you do fall ...

Don't panic – try to stay calm. If you are not hurt and can get up,

take your time, roll onto your hands and knees. Crawl to a stable piece of furniture, such as a chair or bed, to support yourself when getting up.

With your hands on the support, place one foot flat on the floor, bending your knee in front of your tummy. Lean forward, push on your hands and feet, and bring your feet together. Turn and sit on the seat. Rest for a while before getting up.

If you are hurt or can't get up, use your pendant alarm (if you have one), call out for help, bang on the wall or floor if you have to. If possible, crawl to a telephone and dial 999 for an ambulance.

Try to reach something warm, such as a blanket or dressing gown, to put over yourself, particularly your legs and feet. Stay as comfortable as possible and try to change your position at least once every half an hour or so.

Age UK Redbridge, Barking and Havering (RBH), has an excellent falls information pack. Call them for one on 020 8220 6000. They also run chair based exercise classes which can help to increase your mobility, manual dexterity and balance.

Your general wellbeing

Follow these five simple tips to help you cope and keep well this winter.

Keep mobile

Frailty makes us tired. Even small amounts of activity can be exhausting so it's easy to retreat into the comfort of an armchair, particularly during the colder months when other parts of the home may be chilly and unwelcoming. But we all need to keep mobile – even just a little. Try using your stairs for exercise, but make sure that it is safe – do you need an additional hand rail?

Inner fuel

Make sure you eat. Many older, frail people have less of an appetite. You should have at least one decent hot meal a day, along with snacks and hot drinks.

What medicines are you on?

As we get older we become very sensitive to medicines because our body has trouble getting rid of them. This can mean a normal dose of medicine can build-up in the body and cause a bad reaction. Lots of older people end up in hospital because of this. Ask your GP, practice nurse or pharmacist for

a medicines review to make sure you are taking the right drugs.

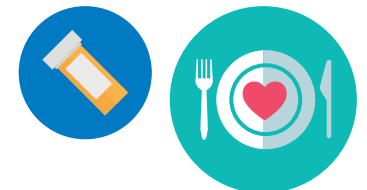
Don't forget the Vitamin D

Vitamin D supplements of 800IU per day have been shown to help reduce the number of falls in housebound, older people. Ask your pharmacist or speak to your GP for more information.

Ask yourself 'do I feel lonely?'

Loneliness can lead to depression, poor sleep, poor thinking skills, more GP visits, more medication, and also a higher rate of falls.

Age UK RBH has a Befriending Service which will call you for a chat and check you are OK and get help quickly if there is a problem. Age UK RBH can also help with information and advice – on winter warmth, making the most of your money, benefits, transport and mobility and much more. Their Home Support Service can help with bathing/showering, shopping, pension collection and cleaning (a charged-for service).



Getting help



Call 111

If you're not sure which NHS service you need, just call 111. An adviser will ask you questions to assess your symptoms and then give you the advice you need, or direct you to the best service for you in your area.



Ask your pharmacist

Your local pharmacists are expert in many aspects of healthcare and can offer advice on a wide range of long-term conditions and common illnesses such as coughs, colds and stomach upsets. You don't need an appointment and many have consultation areas, so they are an excellent first port of call. Your pharmacist will tell you if you need further medical attention. If you are aged 65 or over you can also get a free NHS flu jab, without appointment, from your local pharmacy.



See your family doctor

GPs assess, treat and manage a whole range of health problems. They also provide health education, give vaccinations and carry out simple surgical procedures. Your GP will arrange a referral to a hospital specialist should you need it. GPs in our area are now offering more urgent appointments for those who need them.



Visit a walk-in centre

NHS walk-in centres offer quick access to treatment for a wide variety of minor illnesses and injuries, including infections and stomach aches. Most are managed by nurses but some also have doctors. Walk-in centres are open outside normal working hours and you don't need an appointment. Find them at Barking Community Hospital, Upney Lane Barking - Harold Wood Polyclinic, off Gubbins Lane, Harold Wood or Loxford Polyclinic, Ilford Lane, Ilford.



Community Treatment Team

A team of doctors, nurses, therapists and social workers which provides short term intensive care and support to people experiencing a health and/or social care crisis such as severe pain, difficulty moving after a fall or difficulty breathing. Call them direct on 020 3644 2799 or 07940 301396 between 8am and 10pm, seven days a week.



Accident and Emergency

A&E departments provide vital care for life-threatening emergencies only, such as loss of consciousness, suspected heart attacks, breathing difficulties, or severe bleeding that cannot be stopped. If you're not sure your problem is an emergency, call 111 for advice.





To find out more about the services provided by Age UK in our area call them on **020 8220 6000** or go online at **www.ageukrbh.org.uk**

You can also find your nearest NHS services at **www.notalwaysaande.co.uk** or download our app **NotAlwaysA&E** from iTunes or Google Play.