

## **Key messages for you to support children and families to keep well during winter**

This is a briefing sheet with some key winter messages for anyone to use as a script when in contact with children and family groups. We would ask that you also please share this information and include the following messages in newsletters, leaflets, social, digital media, and email it where you can to others.

You can find a wealth of information to help look after yourself, your friends, your family and community on our website. To stay healthy, prevent illness and get the right care, please visit [www.healthierlsc.co.uk/winter](http://www.healthierlsc.co.uk/winter)

From that webpage you can download and read the [NHS Health-Wise Getting the right support for your child - Facts you need to know about your child's health booklet](#).

We have three key messages that we would like you to remember and share which help protect little ones and reduce the risk of infections for the whole family this season.. These are:

- 1. Ensure all vaccinations are up to date**
- 2. Good hygiene**
- 3. Get the right help and advice**

# 1. Ensure all vaccinations are up to date

Vaccinations are the best defence against severe illness, so to protect your child, check their red book or contact your GP to make sure that your child is up to date with all of their vaccines including MMR. Vaccinations are very safe and effective; they are only licensed for children after long and careful development and testing by researchers and doctors.

## Get the flu vaccination

The children's flu vaccine is safe and effective. It's offered every year as a nasal spray to children to help protect them against flu. For those who may not accept the use of porcine gelatine in medicinal products for any reason, an alternative injectable vaccine is available. All children from the age of 2 up to those in Year 11 are eligible for the vaccine.

Children spread flu easily. Vaccinating them also protects others who are vulnerable to flu, such as babies and older people. Getting vaccinated will not only protect your child but also protect others by stopping outbreaks in nurseries and schools and reducing the risk of spread to your family and friends. It may also help you avoid having to take time off work or arrange alternative childcare as a result of your child getting ill. For more information on the flu vaccine, please visit: [www.healthierlsc.co.uk/winter](http://www.healthierlsc.co.uk/winter)

# 2. Good hygiene

Teach your child how to wash their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes. The good hygiene habits that were used to slow the spread of COVID-19 are important defences against a range of other infections, including respiratory infections and stomach bugs, like norovirus. By teaching your child how to wash their hands properly with soap for 20 seconds, using a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes, and keeping away from others when feeling unwell, they will be able to reduce the risk of picking up, or spreading, infections.

# 3. Get the right help and advice

As a parent, you may know if your child seems seriously unwell and should trust your own judgement. Most GP practices in Lancashire and South Cumbria will ensure a child will be seen on the same day as a request is made as long as the request is made first thing in the morning. This may be over the telephone, or you may be asked to attend your GP practice.

It is not only GPs who are qualified to see and treat you. Seeing a nurse, pharmacist or other expert within general practice, where clinically appropriate, can save time by reducing the number of appointments needed to get the right care.

We would ask that if your appointment is no longer needed that you please contact the surgery (or other health service) to cancel. It doesn't matter if this is only 30 minutes beforehand, NHS services are so busy they will always have someone on standby to take the appointment.

### **Use NHS 111**

NHS 111 is much more than a helpline – if you're worried about an urgent medical concern, you can call 111 to speak to a fully trained adviser. Depending on the situation, the NHS 111 team can connect you to a nurse, emergency dentist or even a GP, and can arrange face-to-face appointments if they think you need one. The advisor will put you through to a trained medical professional who will assess your need.

There may be lots of alternatives that are better for your needs and will mean you get seen and treated quicker and possibly nearer to home. If you need to go to A&E they will arrange an arrival time for you. All you then have to do is go to A&E at that time, register via an express lane and you will be seen as soon as possible, usually within 30 minutes of arrival – this can be longer if A&E is extremely busy. NHS 111 advisers can also assess if you need an ambulance and send one immediately if necessary.

To get help from NHS 111, you can:

- Go online to [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) (for assessment of people aged 5 and over only)
- Call 111 for free from a landline or mobile phone (for all ages)

### **Use your local pharmacy**

If you, your child, or someone you care for starts to feel ill, first of all get help and advice for treating symptoms such as cold and flu from your local pharmacy. Pharmacists are highly trained and skilled healthcare professionals with an expert knowledge of medicines and health. They have the right training to make sure you get the help you need. They can give treatment advice about a range of common conditions and minor injuries, such as: sore throat, coughs, colds, flu, earache, skin rashes, colic, teething, and red eye. If you want to buy an over-the-counter medicine, the pharmacist and their team can help you choose.

Ask your pharmacist what medicines should be in your cabinet to help you and your family this winter. Paracetamol or ibuprofen are the most appropriate medicines for children with mild pain, and other items could include things such as an antiseptic cream and bandages and plasters. Always keep medicines out of sight and reach of children - high, lockable cupboard in a cool, dry place is ideal. Regularly check the expiry dates on a medicine - if a medicine is past its expiry date, don't use it or throw it away. Take it to your pharmacy where it can be disposed of safely.

## **Help with the rising cost of living**

Blackburn with Darwen Council is working with a number of local organisations who can offer support. Visit their website at [www.blackburn.gov.uk/cost-living-support](http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/cost-living-support) to find out how they can help you including information about the Household Support Fund, food, and money and debt.

## **Government support with energy bills**

The government is providing support to millions of people across the UK to help them with their energy bills this winter. Get suggestions on ways to save energy in your home and [get help with your energy bills](#).

## **The Priority Services Register**

Check if you're eligible to register on your energy company's Priority Services Register, a free support service for people in vulnerable situations. For more information visit the [Ofgem website](#).

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding these key messages or insight from the conversations you have, please share it with us. Please email the NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board team at: [Lscicb.ice@nhs.net](mailto:Lscicb.ice@nhs.net)