



Media Release

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Guernsey Together – Stay Well this Winter

As a community, and in the spirit of #GuernseyTogether we need to help each other, and our whole community, to stay well this winter.

Within Health & Social Care planning started earlier than ever before with hospitals, GPs, social services and other health professionals coming together to work out the best way of responding across the whole Bailiwick.

Dr Peter Rabey, Medical Director and Chair of the Winter Planning Group said

“As we approach winter we always need to ensure that we are prepared for the worst, and this winter promises to be particularly challenging. The Winter Planning Group sets out actions that are being taken in readiness across the health and care services.”

Dr Nicola Brink, Director of Public Health highlighted the importance of prevention saying

“For Islanders it is important that we need to know what we can do to keep well throughout the winter months. Through our Winter Planning Group we will do all we can to ensure our frontline health and care services are prepared for the winter but we also need Islanders to work together to stop the spread of viruses, including COVID-19, and protect the most vulnerable in our society.

Of course COVID-19 presents a particular challenge this winter, and anyone who has flu-like or cold symptoms – new muscle ache for no apparent reason, new and severe fatigue, headache (sinus pain, pain around eyes), loss of smell/taste, sore throat, fever (high temperature, rigors, chills, can't get warm), shortness of breath, chest tightness, continuous new cough) no matter how mild, should contact the Clinical Helpline by calling 01481 756938 or 01481 756969 or speak to their GP.”

Prevention is better than cure. For example, proper hand washing is our best defense in winter against viruses and bacteria that can make us sick. Good hand hygiene can break the chain of infection and stop us getting sick in the first place.

So 'catch it, bin it, kill it' is so important this winter. This promotes good respiratory and hand hygiene by recommending carrying tissues, using them to catch a cough or sneeze, disposing of them immediately in a waste bin and then killing any remaining viruses by washing hands or using hand sanitiser.

To stay healthy this winter it is important to consider a number of things:

Be aware of who is most at risk from cold weather?

Some people are more vulnerable to the effects of cold weather. This includes:

- people aged 65 and older
- babies and children under the age of 5
- people on a low income (so cannot afford heating)
- people who have a long-term health condition
- people with a disability
- pregnant women
- people who have a mental health condition

Get advice if you feel unwell

It is important that you get advice if you are feeling unwell through your GP Practice.

Get a flu vaccine

Flu will often get better on its own, but it can make some people seriously ill. It's important to get the flu vaccine if you're advised to.

The flu vaccine is a safe and effective vaccine.

The best time to have the flu vaccine is in the autumn before flu starts spreading. But you can get the vaccine later.

Many vulnerable groups can receive the flu vaccine free of charge. Please contact your Primary Care provider (GP) to discuss. Additionally, those aged 50 to 65 can receive a subsidised flu vaccination this winter from all Primary Care providers in Guernsey and Alderney

We are encouraging all eligible islanders to get their flu vaccine as soon as possible.

Keep your home warm

Follow these tips to keep you and your family warm and well at home:

- if you're not very mobile, are 65 or over, or have a health condition, such as heart or lung disease, heat your home to at least 18°C
- keep your bedroom at 18°C all night if you can – and keep bedroom window closed
- if you're under 65, healthy and active, you can safely have your home cooler than 18°C, as long as you're comfortable
- have at least 1 hot meal a day – eating regularly helps keep you warm
- have hot drinks regularly
- draw curtains at dusk and keep doors closed to block out draughts
- get your heating system checked regularly by a qualified professional

Look in on vulnerable neighbours and relatives

In the spirit of #GuernseyTogether, check on older neighbours and relatives, and those with heart or breathing (respiratory) problems, to make sure they:

- are safe and well
- are warm enough, especially at night
- have stocks of food and medicines so they do not need to go out during very cold weather