

Winter Health Update – January 2023

For parents/carers and education and childcare settings
From Geraldine Bruce, Head of Health Protection, Hertfordshire Public Health

As children return to schools and childcare settings, we expect to see many more cases of flu, COVID-19 and other infections that affect children's breathing (known as 'respiratory infections'). There also continue to be high numbers of scarlet fever cases, which can spread quickly, but can be easily treated with antibiotics. To help us through this term, this leaflet has five simple steps we can take to protect children, minimise the spread of illness in schools and childcare settings and protect others.

1. Stay home if unwell

Infections can spread quickly in schools and other childcare settings. If your child is unwell and has a fever they should stay home from school or nursery until they feel better and their fever has gone. Adults should try to stay home when unwell and consider wearing a face covering to protect others if you do have to go out. Don't visit people in hospitals or care homes if you have a fever, a cold or symptoms of a stomach upset.

2. Keep hands clean

It is important to help children understand that keeping hands clean can stop bugs from spreading. Help your child wash their hands regularly at home with soap and warm water. More information here <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/>

3. Catch coughs and sneezes

Catching coughs and sneezes in tissues then binning them is a simple way to help stop illness from spreading. Keeping rooms well ventilated will also help prevent the spread of winter illness.

4. Get vaccinated if you're eligible

Now is a good time to check your you and your family's vaccinations are all up to date. If you are unsure your child has had all their routine vaccinations, you can check their personal health record (Red Book) or ask your GP.

You can also check the childhood immunisation schedule online here

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1055502/UKHSA-12155-routine-childhood-immunisation-schedule_Feb2022.pdf

And it's not too late to get the free NHS flu jab or nasal spray this year if anyone in your family is eligible. The NHS will be contacting parents of children who have not yet had their flu immunisation. Flu nasal spray clinics are still taking place in some schools this month, or for children aged 2-3, please contact your GP to arrange an appointment.

5. Be scarlet fever aware

Call your GP for advice if you think your child has scarlet fever. More information about scarlet fever can be found on the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/scarlet-fever/>

If you are concerned about a rash that your child has, advice is available here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/rashes-babies-and-children/>

Further updates and resources can be found here:

www.hwehealthiertogether.nhs.uk

www.gov.uk/government/news/back-to-school-advice-issued-amid-high-levels-of-flu-covid-19-andscarlet-fever

www.e-bug.eu

www.gov.uk/government/publications/infectious-diseases-schools-and-other-childcare-settings