

PRESS RELEASE – 12th December 2017

Top ten tips to stay well as local NHS braces for busy winter

Staff at South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts are appealing for the public's support as they prepare to deal with the traditional winter surge which puts pressure on all parts of the health and social care system.

Working together as part of the South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group, both Trusts have put in place robust operational plans to effectively manage the expected increase in demand on services which typically happens at this time of year when more patients, particularly older people, need help from the NHS.

Almost 3,000 NHS staff in South Tyneside and more than 4,200 in Sunderland have now been vaccinated against the flu to protect themselves, their patients and their loved ones as they prepare for a busy time caring for patients over the cold winter months ahead.

Both Trusts are now appealing for the public's support to help ease pressure on all parts of the NHS by following these simple top ten tips to stay well this winter:

Feeling under the weather?

Here are our top ten tips to help you, your family and the NHS this winter:

1. If you have kids under five, download the 'NHS Child Health' app free from the app store. It has been developed by medical experts and covers everything from oral health, upset tummies and diarrhoea, to advice on bumps and bruises.
2. Remember, there are lots of seasonal viruses circulating at this time of year and most of them just require some good old TLC. Sore throats, coughs and

colds and upset tummies will all clear up if you simply look after yourself well (rest, drink plenty of fluids and take over the counter medication).

3. Your high street pharmacist is a medical expert and can advise you on a whole range of minor illnesses without the need for an appointment. Many pharmacies have private consultation rooms and are open late in the evenings and at weekends, too. If you start to feel unwell, get help from your pharmacist quickly before it gets more serious.
4. If you are eligible for the free flu vaccine please get the jab as soon as possible. The NHS offers the vaccine for free to anyone aged 65 and over, pregnant women, and children and adults with an underlying health condition (particularly long-term heart or respiratory disease) or with weakened immune systems.
5. Christmas is just around the corner and now is the time to order any repeat prescriptions you might need from your GP. It's also a good idea to stock up your medicines cabinet with things you might need to combat common winter illnesses.
6. If you do need GP advice, remember surgeries across Sunderland and South Tyneside are opening their doors for longer, giving more people the chance to access appointments on evenings, weekends and bank holidays. They are even open on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Simply call your usual practice or use the free NHS 111 number if it's out of hours.
7. NHS 111 is available 24/7 if you need urgent medical help or advice when it's not life-threatening. NHS 111 is staffed by a team of fully trained advisers, supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. You should call 111 if you:
 - need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency
 - think you need to go to A&E or need another NHS urgent care service
 - don't know who to call or don't have a GP to call
 - need health information or reassurance about what to do next

8. Please, please, please help us to keep our busy emergency departments and 999 ambulance services free for those who really need them. The NHS always sees more people requiring emergency hospital admission at this time of year and it's important that everyone plays their part to keep our hospitals free for those with serious or life-threatening emergencies.
9. Spare a thought for others who are more vulnerable and check up on older friends, relatives or neighbours to make sure they are warm enough and have stocks of food and medicines so they don't need to go out during very cold weather. It's important to keep warm and to stay indoors during very cold weather if you have heart or respiratory problems.
10. 'Tis the season to be jolly but please make sure you drink sensibly and don't over indulge on alcohol and food. If you are out and about enjoying the festivities, wrap up warm and, yes, please put a coat on.

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Issued by: Kay Jordan

For press enquiries on this release, contact **0191 404 1128** or email

kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk