

Groundswell

Out of homelessness



Top tips for looking after your health this winter

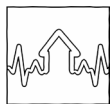
December 2021

Updated to include Omicron guidance



Top tips from staff with experience of homelessness

- “Remember COVID-19 is still here”
- “Get vaccinated for flu and COVID-19”
- “Keep warm”
- “Keep dry”
- “Register with a GP”
- “Let someone know if you feel unwell”
- “Get an advocate or support worker to help”
- “Keep engaging with services”
- “Let people know what you need”
- “Flu can be as bad as COVID-19”
- “Find out where to get warm clothing”
- “Have your property checked for energy efficiency if you’re indoors”
- “Check out the warm home discount scheme if you’re indoors and get £140 off your energy bills”
- “Wear a mask”
- “Find out where your local services are. In some areas, the list in the Pavement Magazine is a great help.”



Top ways to look after yourself and protect your health

1. If you have a health problem or worry you can talk to your GP about it

Everyone has the right to register with a GP:

- You don't need a fixed address
- You don't need to show identification
- Your immigration status doesn't matter

If you're struggling to get a health appointment, ask a support worker for help.

2. Try to attend any health appointments you have

You have the right to access your healthcare appointments.

If you have a GP or hospital appointment you can ask your support worker about help getting there or to accompany you to the appointment.

3. Free COVID-19 tests

COVID-19 tests are freely available to everyone.

They involve gently swabbing your nose and your throat. About 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms but can still infect others, so getting tested is the best way to know whether you have the virus.

Lateral flow tests (LFTs)

- It's a good idea to take an LFT twice a week.
- It's possible that your accommodation or a local service will have lateral flow tests available to you. Ask a support worker for more information.
- Other ways to get free tests are at a pharmacy, testing site or online here: www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests.

PCR tests

You should get a free 'PCR test' as soon as possible if you have any of the following COVID-19 symptoms:

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- The loss of/change to your sense of smell or taste.

You can order a PCR test online here:

www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test.

Speak to a support worker for help. You should try and self-isolate until you get your test result.





Top ways to look after yourself and protect your health continued

4. Protect yourself against flu and COVID-19

Both winter flu and COVID-19 can cause serious illness and death. Vaccination significantly reduces this risk.

Protect yourself and others against flu

You can get a flu vaccine free on the NHS:

- if you are homeless in London, whatever your age.
- if you are not in London ask your pharmacy or GP if you are eligible for a free vaccine. Those eligible include people:
 - aged 65 or over
 - with long-term health conditions
 - who are pregnant
 - with a weakened immune system.

Where you can get a flu vaccine:

- Your GP.
- Some pharmacies.
- Walk-in clinics.
- Some hostel or day centres will arrange a special day for flu vaccines. Ask a support worker for information on whether they are coming to your service.



Protect yourself and others against COVID-19

It has become even more important to be vaccinated because a new version of the virus called 'Omicron' is spreading fast.

Omicron is much more infectious, meaning it is easier to catch it and pass it on to others, even if you are fully vaccinated.

Therefore, keep looking after yourself and others by following the COVID-19 advice:

- test regularly
- wash your hands regularly
- wear a face mask in shops, on public transport and in crowded places
- social distance from others as much as you can.

Some venues are asking people for proof of vaccination or a negative LFT test in the last 48 hours. Ask a support worker if you need help with providing this.

Anyone in the UK aged over 16 can get COVID-19 vaccines free on the NHS.

The vaccine comes in three doses. The third dose is known as a 'booster' dose.

Having all three doses gives you the best possible protection against COVID-19, including Omicron.

- All adults are entitled to all three vaccine doses, as long as there are three months between each dose.
- The booster improves the protection you have from your first two doses, and gives you better protection against Omicron.
- Many areas have fast-track walk-in schemes if you're homeless. Check with a support worker whether there's one near you and how to access it.

Where you can get COVID-19 vaccines:

- Attending a walk-in vaccination site (available for those not registered with a GP). Search for your nearest here: www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-walk-in-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-site
- Book an appointment online here: www.nhs.uk/book-a-coronavirus-vaccination
- A vaccination service may come to your accommodation or a local service - check whether this is happening with a support worker.

If you cannot book appointments online, you can call 119 free of charge. You can speak to a translator if you need to.

More information

More information on looking after your health is available online. If you don't have access to the internet you could ask a support worker to print off information for you.

- Find more COVID-19 guidance created for people experiencing homelessness on the Groundswell website here: www.groundswell.org.uk/coronavirus. The guidance is available in a number of different languages. It includes answering questions about how the COVID-19 vaccine works and possible side effects.
- Groundswell also have more health guides about a variety of health issues available here: www.groundswell.org.uk/health-guides
- Access guidance from the NHS on flu and COVID-19:
 - www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu
 - www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19