

# Groundswell

Out of homelessness



## Top tips for looking after your health this winter

November 2021



### 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

- 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](https://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](https://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

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

##### **Where you can get COVID-19 vaccines:**

- Attending a walk-in vaccination site (available for those not registered with a GP).
- Visit the local vaccine website or walk-in sites in your local area.
- Booking an appointment at a local pharmacy or a mass vaccination site (for those registered with a GP).
- 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.

##### **The vaccine is offered to people in two doses:**

- The first dose gives you a good level of protection.
- The second dose is generally offered about 12 weeks after the first. It makes your protection against the virus even better.
- Having both first and second doses of the vaccine ensures you have the best level of protection.

##### **COVID-19 booster vaccine:**

- A COVID-19 booster vaccine dose helps improve the protection you have from your first two doses of the vaccine. It helps give you longer-term protection against getting seriously ill from COVID-19.
- Booster vaccine doses will be available soon on the NHS for people most at risk from COVID-19 who have had the vaccine second dose at least 6 months ago.

It is still possible to catch and spread COVID-19, even if you are fully vaccinated.

Therefore, keep looking after yourself and others by following the COVID-19 advice in your area such as regular testing, regular hand washing, wearing a face mask and social distancing.



## 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](http://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](http://www.groundswell.org.uk/health-guides)
- Access guidance from the NHS on flu and COVID-19:
  - [www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu)
  - [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19)

