

# Groundswell

Out of homelessness



## GP Preventative Care: screening and vaccinations

‘Prevention is better than cure’

### What is a GP?

- A General Practitioner (GP) or a ‘family doctor’ is a **doctor based in the community**

### What services can a GP provide?

- One of the services that your GP can provide is ‘**preventative care**’. This includes screening for a variety of diseases and **vaccinations** to prevent diseases
- **Some people are more at risk** from certain medical conditions and should be screened
- If you have **any concerns** about your health it is **best to get it checked out**



### Important vaccinations – ask your GP:

#### Flu vaccination

- Flu can be more severe for certain people, and vaccination is free to anyone over 65, pregnant women, and people with underlying health conditions or in at-risk groups.
- In London if you are homeless you qualify for free flu vaccination. GP’s and pharmacies have been advised to be flexible however it is their decision.

#### Pneumococcal vaccination

- This vaccine protects against a type of pneumonia (infection in the lungs)
- It is a one-off vaccination but may be boosted every 5 years
- It is free to anyone over 65, pregnant women, and people with underlying health conditions or in at-risk groups

#### Hepatitis B vaccination

- Hepatitis B virus is found in the blood and bodily fluids of an infected person
- Many people with Hepatitis B have few symptoms. This means they may spread the infection without knowing
- The vaccination is not free but may be free at specialist practices for people at risk

### Vaccinations

- A vaccination is an **injection that can protect you from certain diseases**
- Many vaccinations are given when we are children, but some people may have missed these
- Vaccinations can be **provided by your GP**



There may be other routine vaccines that may also be relevant to you, including those that you may have missed as a child. Ask for a ‘Practice Nurse’ appointment to discuss if there are any vaccinations you have missed.

**Translated versions of this document are available here:**

<https://www.healthy london.org/resource/homeless-health-during-covid-19/>

**This information is correct as of 16/10/20**

## Ask your GP about these services

### National screening programmes

Screening is a way of finding out if you are at higher risk of a health problem, so that information or early treatment can be offered

- The **NHS Health Check** offers a health check every five years for anyone between 40 and 74 years old
- **Chronic disease checks** - People with high blood pressure, heart problems or other cardiovascular diseases, asthma, diabetes, epilepsy should have yearly checks at their GP
- **Cervical screening** (smear test)– offered for women aged 25 to 64 every three or five years depending on age
- **Breast cancer screening** – offered every 3 years to women aged 50 to 70
- **Bowel cancer screening** – home testing kit is offered to men and women aged 60 to 74

### Sexual health screening

- If you have had **unprotected sex** (without a condom) you can contract a sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- Many people with STIs do not get any symptoms, but they can pass the infection on or suffer unseen consequences (like infertility)
- **STIs can be tested using swabs or urine tests** which you can get from your GP or you may wish to go to a sexual health clinic

### Blood Borne Virus screening

- Blood borne viruses (BBV) that are commonly tested include HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C
- You may be more at risk of having a BBV if you have travelled from a country where transmission is high, take illegal drugs or engage in certain sexual behaviours
- If you think you are at risk of a BBV and would like to be screened, **ask your GP for a blood test**

### Tuberculosis screening

- Tuberculosis (TB) is an infection of the lungs
- People at risk of having TB include migrants from certain countries where TB is common, people living in overcrowded accommodation, people experiencing homelessness, people with substance misuse issues and prisoners
- Symptoms of TB include a **consistent cough, coughing up blood, weight loss, and night sweats**
- If you have any of these symptoms, **talk to your GP**

### General concerns about unexplained symptoms

If you feel that **your physical or mental health has changed, you should talk to your GP**. Contact your GP if you have any of the following:

- a persistent cough (over 3 weeks) and shortness of breath
- a persistent sore throat, a change in voice or difficulty swallowing
- ongoing weight loss with no known cause
- bleeding from your bowels or when you urinate
- new growths or lumps / bumps on or under your skin
- new unexplained pains (lasting over 3 weeks)

