



Hertfordshire and
West Essex Integrated
Care System



Hertfordshire and
West Essex
Integrated Care Board



Helping you keep
fit and well



This health information booklet contains advice to help older residents of Hertfordshire and west Essex keep healthy this winter.

We hope that you find this booklet a useful and interesting read. Please remember that the NHS, local councils and voluntary organisations are always here to help you with your health and wellbeing, or your concerns about the rising cost of living. Keep this booklet somewhere handy so you can look back at it later.

Tips to help during cold weather

- Keep an eye on the weather forecast. If bad weather is on the way, make sure you have everything you need. Check you have enough medicine and food in case it's harder to leave the house.
- Keep emergency numbers nearby. **111** for urgent health help, **999** if it's a health emergency.
- Have torches and spare batteries handy in case of a power cut. If you have a mobile phone, a portable charger can be useful if the power goes.
- The **Priority Services Register** is a free service to provide extra help to older or vulnerable people if there are gas or electricity supply problems. Contact your energy supplier(s) and ask to be added to the register. Call **105** in the event of a power cut – you can report it and get information and advice.
- Take extra care if the ground is slippery. Wear shoes with good grip if you go out. Ask your neighbours for help to clear paths if it snows – most people are happy to help.
- A personal alarm can give you peace of mind. Contact your district or borough council to find out more.





Keep warm, stay well

Being cold isn't just uncomfortable - it can also be bad for your health and wellbeing. Low temperatures increase your risk of catching flu and can lead to raised blood pressure which make a heart attack or stroke more likely.

We're all trying to save on energy costs this winter, but keep your living room and bedroom at least 18°C (64°F). It's best to keep your house at a stable temperature rather than turning the heating up and down.

If you can't heat rooms easily, try to heat yourself. Eat warm meals and drink hot drinks.

Wear several layers – this will keep you warmer than wearing one big jumper. If you have an electric blanket or throw, consider using it during the day as well as at night. Check electric blankets for wear and tear.

Tips to keep the chill out...

- Keep moving if you can – stretch and move around every hour.
- Close the curtains as it gets dark – this keeps heat in.
- Shut room doors that you're not using.
- Check for draughts and cover gaps under doors.



- Avoid heating rooms you don't use – you might prefer to turn radiators down in these rooms or turn them off altogether.
- Protect yourself against chilblains - these are red, itchy swellings you can get when your skin gets cold and you try to warm up too quickly – for instance, by sitting close to an open fire, a radiator or heater.

To help prevent chilblains, keep yourself warm at all times. If you do get them, dab the swellings with calamine so they're less itchy – but don't scratch them, as that could cause an infection. Speak to your pharmacist for advice and see your GP if you get chilblains regularly or have diabetes.



Help with heaters, insulation and draught-proofing may be available.

If you live in Hertfordshire, call **0300 345 3446**.

If you live in Essex, call the Citizens Advice Warm Homes team on **0300 303 3789**.

Some places, including libraries, places of worship and community centres are offering a 'warm welcome' for anyone who wants to call in, chat with others or take part in activities.

To find your nearest warm space visit www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/warmspaces or call HertsHelp (a network of community organisations working together) on 0300 123 4044. In Essex go to www.essexwellbeingsservice.co.uk or call 0300 303 9988.



Feeling forgetful?

Most of us forget things from time to time, but if you keep having problems with your memory, or you notice a sudden change, please tell someone. It could be caused by something that is easily treated.

If you're feeling forgetful or you feel anxious about someone who is, please talk to your GP. There is a lot that can be done to help people manage their memory problems and stay confident and independent for as long as possible.

The Alzheimer's Society runs local support groups across our area which can help if you've had a diagnosis of dementia or are just worried about a loved one's memory. Find details on their website www.alzheimers.org.uk/find-support-near-you or by calling **0333 150 3456**.

In Essex, call the Dementia Connect support line on **0333 150 3456**.

In Hertfordshire, Hertswise, is a voluntary sector partnership providing support to people with memory issues and their carers. Contact them on **0300 123 4044**.





Health help on the high street

A pharmacist can do much more than just dispense medicines.

Pharmacists are experts in medicines who can help you with minor health concerns. They are also trained in managing minor illnesses.

Pharmacists can offer medical advice and recommend over-the-counter medicines for a range of minor illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats and aches and pains.

If your symptoms suggest it's something more serious, pharmacists are trained to make sure you get the help you need

and will tell you if you need to see a GP, nurse or other healthcare professional.

If you have questions about the medicines your GP has prescribed, a pharmacist can help explain when and how to take them.

Many pharmacies are open until late and at weekends and you don't need an appointment.

There are around 300 pharmacies across Hertfordshire and west Essex and most have a private consultation room where you can discuss your concerns privately.



Your GP practice is here for you

The way GP practices support their patients is changing. With people needing more help than ever before, practices are working differently so that you can get the help you need.

Many will now ask you to have a consultation over the phone first, and then ask you to come along to the surgery only if the GP would like to assess you in person. For many people this is a convenient way of getting the help you need from your practice.

Please tell your GP practice if you think you need a face-to-face appointment.

The phone lines for your GP practice are often very busy in the morning, so it may be better to phone later in the day, once the initial rush calms down. If phone lines are busy then please persevere. Or go to the practice in person, don't let your worries grow.

Your practice might make an appointment with one of

their specialists, like a physio, diabetes nurse or medicines expert.

If you feel comfortable using technology, you can also provide details of your symptoms through an online form on most GP practices' websites during surgery opening hours, or ask a trusted family member or friend to help. Your practice will get back to you quickly and you can get help without hanging on the phone.



Welcome home from hospital

If you or a someone you care for has been in hospital for tests or treatment, you may be worried about how to look after them when they return home.

Almost as soon as someone goes into hospital, staff will start planning their discharge. This means that when doctors decide that someone is medically fit to go home, there should already be a plan in place for them to return home quickly and safely, including any ongoing NHS or social care support they have been assessed as needing.



You can help give them a warm welcome home by:

- Clearing clutter to create space to move around the home easily.

- Keeping the bedroom warm – using extra blankets or duvets if needed.
- Offering hot food and drinks regularly – but don't worry if they don't have much of an appetite to begin with.
- Looking at any medicine they've been prescribed, and ordering more when needed so they don't run out. Talk to their GP if you are unsure.
- Following any guidance given by the hospital.

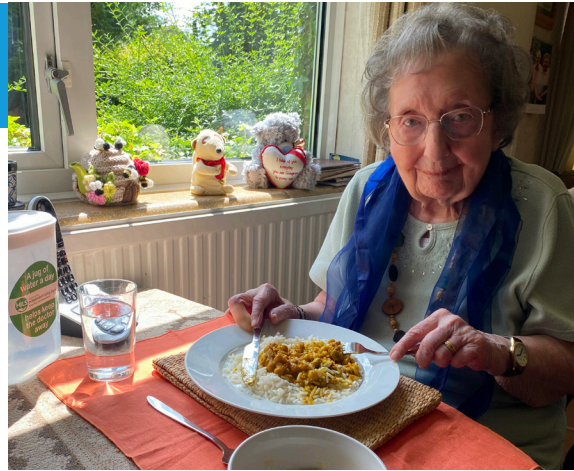
Age UK and other organisations may also offer 'home from hospital support' on a free or paid-for basis. This may help to get you ready for the patient's return and assist with tasks like shopping, befriending and light housework.

Contact Hertfordshire's 'Hospital and Community Navigation Service' by calling HertsHelp on **0300 123 4044**.



Eating well

As you get older, your appetite might reduce and you might feel less thirsty, meaning that it is easy to forget to eat or drink enough. This can lead to health issues and put you at more risk of falling.



Eating for health

When it's cold outside, eating foods like soups and pies with hot gravy can help you to stay warm and well-nourished. Make sure your meals are balanced and include protein, dairy, carbohydrates, fruit and vegetables.

If you find it hard to prepare your own food safely, **Hertfordshire Independent Living Service (HILS)** offers a nutritionally balanced meals on wheels service at a small cost. Diabetics, vegetarians and those on special diets are catered for. Meals are delivered to your door ready to eat, by friendly staff.

Staying hydrated

Most of us remember to drink regularly in hot weather, but it's just as important to do this all year round. Keep a jug of water, squash, or whatever you enjoy, close by and aim to drink 6-8 cups a day. Tea, coffee, or soup are also good ways to hydrate, and will warm you up too.

Need more help?

HILS offers extra support alongside meal deliveries for those who need it, including welfare checks, help to serve and cut up food and reminders to take medication. Call **0330 2000 103** or email:

info@hertsindependentliving.org
www.hertsindependentliving.org





Eating on a budget

- Batch cooking (making more than you need and freezing it) can help save money and time.
- Frozen or tinned fruit and veg are just as good for you as fresh, and will last longer.
- Cheaper products are not always at eye level on supermarket shelves. Own brand products often taste as good as branded items.

Across our area, there are community groups who rescue surplus and unsold food that would otherwise be thrown away by supermarkets. Often these are run on a 'pay as you feel' basis, while some groups suggest a £2 minimum donation for a bag of groceries. These community groups, shown here, can really help you to eat healthily on a tight budget:

The Bounty Club, St Paul's Church, Harlow

www.mrct.org.uk/bountyclub

Random Café, Meriden Gardens, Garsmouth Way, Watford

www.randomcafe Watford.com

Best Before Café, Garden Square Shopping Centre, Letchworth

www.bestbeforecafe.co.uk

The Hertford Pantry, Sele Community Hub, Fleming Crescent, Hertford

If you're struggling to afford the essentials or need advice and support you can call 'Help through Hardship' on **0808 208 2138**.

www.essex.gov.uk/help-with-meals-and-shopping

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/foodsupport



Living well with a long-term condition

Living with a long-term health condition like diabetes, asthma or heart disease can be challenging. Many of us have a condition with symptoms which we need to keep a close eye on. It's important to know what feels normal for you and to be aware of changes to your health.

If you're noticing stronger, more frequent or different symptoms, or if you just don't feel quite right, this can be a sign that you may need additional help. If you think something has changed with your health, don't just ignore it. Please call your GP practice to make an appointment to discuss things.

Here is some advice on managing long-term conditions like asthma or COPD, heart problems and diabetes.

Breathing problems

- Don't ignore breathlessness. It could be a sign that your asthma or another condition is getting worse. Cold weather can make breathing problems worse.

- If you have asthma, take your preventer inhaler every day even if you feel well. Your preventer medicine (usually a brown inhaler) builds up protection over time. Take it as directed to keep on top of symptoms.



- Carry your blue reliever inhaler with you every day, in case you feel your symptoms flaring up.
- If breathing at night is difficult then try propping your head up on pillows.



Make an urgent appointment to see your GP or asthma nurse if:

- you feel more breathless
- you are coughing/wheezing more than usual
- you haven't been sleeping well
- your chest feels tighter
- you are using your blue inhaler three times a week or more.

Remember, always call 999 for an ambulance if you are struggling to breathe.

Heart disease

If you have heart disease, or think you do, there's a lot you can do to protect your heart health.

- Keep taking your medicines as prescribed – don't skip a dose. Talk to a GP, nurse or pharmacist if you are confused about what to take and when. You might find that using a pill organiser is helpful – available to buy from pharmacies.

- Take things easy – breaking down a big task like housework into lots of smaller parts can help you manage it more easily.
- Cutting down on caffeine, alcohol and salt in your food can help.

Signs to look out for include:

- shortness of breath that isn't related to usual activity
- increased swelling in your legs or ankles
- significant weight gain over a few days
- swelling or pain in your abdomen
- trouble sleeping or waking up feeling short of breath
- a dry, hacking cough
- increasing tiredness or feeling tired all the time.

Remember, if you experience chest pain, dial 999 immediately.



Diabetes

If you've been diagnosed with diabetes, you'll need to eat healthily to ensure your blood glucose stays balanced. If you have spent more time sitting indoors recently, this can increase your blood glucose levels. Being active will lower your level. You should aim for around 2 – 3 hours of activity a week. You can be active anywhere, even gardening or housework counts!

Please remember to take any medicine prescribed for your diabetes and don't skip doses.

Don't forget those check ups!

It's really important if you have diabetes to have your eyes and feet examined by a specialist regularly.

Try to check your own feet daily if you can. Use a mirror if you find bending difficult. Because diabetes can make your feet feel less sensitive, you may not notice if your foot is sore or injured.



Keeping active

Moving for just 30 minutes a day can help you stay strong and independent. It can also improve your emotional health. Being outside, even if just for a gentle walk, will help you get some fresh air. But if the weather is too bad to go out, there are simple strength and balance exercises you can do indoors with a dining chair.

Ankle activators

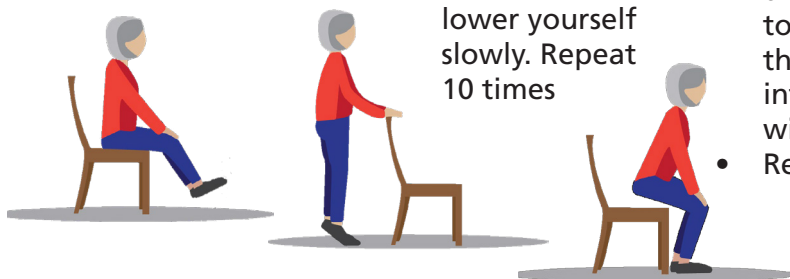
- Place one foot in front, with your heel on the floor
- Lift your foot and place toes where your heel originally was
- Repeat 4 times for each foot

Heel raises

- Stand tall, holding the back of a chair
- Lift heels off the floor, taking the weight onto your toes
- Hold for three seconds, then lower yourself slowly. Repeat 10 times

Sit to stand

- Sit at the front of the chair with feet slightly back
- Lean forwards and stand up fully (holding chair if needed)
- Shuffle back until your legs touch the chair then sit down into the chair with control
- Repeat 10 times



Health walks available near you

Hertfordshire and west Essex are full of green spaces and there are groups to help you make the most of it through health walks and other activities. www.ActiveEssex.org or phone 0333 013 1620
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/healthwalks www.movingmore.co.uk



Don't fall foul of a fall!

Do you find it difficult to move around your home? Or have you recently fallen or felt unsteady? Do you have difficulty hearing a conversation or problems with blurred vision? Are you eating and drinking as well as you can?

Falls become a serious health hazard as we get older. If you answered yes to the questions above, talk to your GP.

Here are some tips to reduce your risk of falling:

- Remove clutter and trip hazards like loose cables and rugs.
- Hold on to the handrail when going up or down stairs.
- Check your slippers and shoes fit well and have a good grip.
- Put a lamp beside your bed – to help you to see when you need to get up.
- Get up slowly and steadily if you wake in the night to go to the toilet.
- Have a glass of water by the bed so you don't have to get up if you feel thirsty.

If you feel dizzy when you stand up or get out of bed, get your blood pressure checked. Sometimes blood pressure can drop when you move or get up suddenly. It is more common in older people and there are things you can do to reduce symptoms. Your doctor may need to review your medication but don't stop taking any medicines without talking to your GP first.

For advice about things that can help you stay independent, like grab rails or shower seats, contact:

- Essex County Council's adult social care team on **0345 603 7630**.
- In Hertfordshire, go to **www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/equipment**





Staying Connected

It has been the strangest couple of years. Our lives have all changed in some way and maybe we've got out of the habit of doing some of the social things we enjoy. It's so important to keep looking after yourself and keep connected to the people or activities you love.

Call your friends and family regularly on the phone and see how they are. They would love to hear from you. A video call, if you have the technology, is fun and fulfilling.

Make the most of your neighbours. Have a chat with a trusted neighbour to keep in touch. They may be able to help with things like shopping or fixing something around the house if you need it.

Here are some ideas to keep you busy during the winter months.

Get some fresh air – if you can, try and get out of the house every day, even for a short walk. A change of scenery can really brighten up your day.

Keep active indoors – if the weather is truly awful, you don't have to brave it to get some gentle exercise. Keeping moving indoors can lift your mood and keep your joints from becoming too stiff. Why not put your favourite music on to motivate you to get up and moving?



Find a club near you – day services and lunch clubs are great places to go to for some company. Contact your local council to find one near you.

Try a new craft or hobby – if you are not able to leave your house very often, maybe try jigsaws, card making, model making or crochet. Or learn some new technology skills?

Volunteer for your local charity – if you feel able there are so many opportunities available to volunteer, both from your home and out in the community, from gardening to befriending to fundraising. Your wealth of experience and knowledge would be warmly welcomed at your local charity.

www.govolherts.org.uk
01462 689409

Don't suffer in silence if you're feeling alone – social prescribers at your GP practice can help. They can put you in touch with a range of local organisations and community groups. For a cheerful chat with a volunteer, try Silver Line on **0800 470 80 90**. See the back page for organisations which can offer help.



Are you a carer for a family member or friend?

Carer support organisations are here to help you. They can give advice and offer emotional as well as practical support, including letting you know what benefits and discounts you might be entitled to as an unpaid carer.

Find details of these organisations on the back page of this booklet.



7 symptoms you must not ignore

When it comes to managing your health, it's vital to know your body and what feels normal for you. If you notice a change in your health or a new symptom, call your GP surgery so they can investigate. Here are some of the important symptoms you should always take seriously and discuss with your GP.



1. Unexplained weight loss

If you're losing a lot of weight without trying, you should get it checked out.

2. Unusual lumps and bumps

Any lump or swelling that won't go away needs looking at. This includes any lumps in the neck, armpit, stomach, groin, chest, breast or testicle.

3. Sensitive skin

If your skin is unusually pale, a mole has changed shape or got bigger or you have a sore that is not healing, call your GP practice. Keeping your skin well moisturised in cold weather can stop painful cracked hands.

4. Cough! Cough!

A lingering cough can sometimes be a symptom of cancer, or another illness, especially if it's still bothering you after a month. If your throat always feels hoarse, or it hurts to swallow, please get seen.



5. Think FAST!

If anyone shows any of the following symptoms associated with a stroke, please don't delay. Call 999 immediately. Don't ignore it - seek medical help now.

Face - Has their face fallen on one side?

Arms - Can they lift both arms?

Speech - Is their speech slurred?

Time - to call 999

6. Toilet troubles

If you need to visit the loo more often, it's painful, or if you find it hard to go even when you want to, talk to your GP. If you see blood in the toilet bowl, please get checked.

7. Feeling down

If you feel sad or anxious about the rising cost of living, or anything else which is troubling you, don't keep it to yourself. It is better to talk to someone to get some help. You can contact:

- Hertfordshire Wellbeing Service on **0800 6444 101**
- Vitamins, which works with the NHS to provide talking therapies and counselling in west Essex: **0333 015 2966**
- Hertfordshire Mind: **0203 7273 600**
www.hertsmindnetwork.org
- West Essex Mind: **01371 876 641**
www.mindinwestessex.org.uk
- Or call **111** and select option 2



Useful contacts

Call 999 in a medical or mental health emergency. This is when someone is very seriously ill or injured.

If you feel unwell and need urgent health help, please **phone 111**. Open 24 hours a day and free to call, NHS 111's fully trained advisers will give you the advice you need or arrange help from the right person, saving you time and worry. You can also go online to www.111.nhs.uk

HertsHelp is a free service for Hertfordshire residents which can put you in touch with practical help and emotional support in your area. Call: **0300 123 4044** Email: info@hertshelp.net
Visit: www.hertshelp.net

Age UK Hertfordshire
0300 345 3446
info@ageukherts.org.uk

Age UK Advice Line
0800 678 1602
Open 8am to 7pm, every day

Information for carers
For support and advice about being a friend or family carer:

Carers First (Essex) **0300 303 1555**
Carers in Hertfordshire
01992 586969

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/carers
www.essex.gov.uk/carers

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Adult Care Services

Hertfordshire
0300 123 4042
contact@hertfordshire.gov.uk
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/adults

Essex
0345 603 7630
socialcaredirect@essex.gov.uk
www.essex.gov.uk/topic/adult-social-care-and-health

Mental health and wellbeing support

Mind in west Essex **01371 876 641**
Herts Mind Network **020 3727 3600**
Mind in Mid Herts **01727 865 070**

For urgent mental health support, **dial 111 and choose option 2**

