

Stay well this winter.

Prepare, prevent
& manage at home

STAY WELL
THIS WINTER

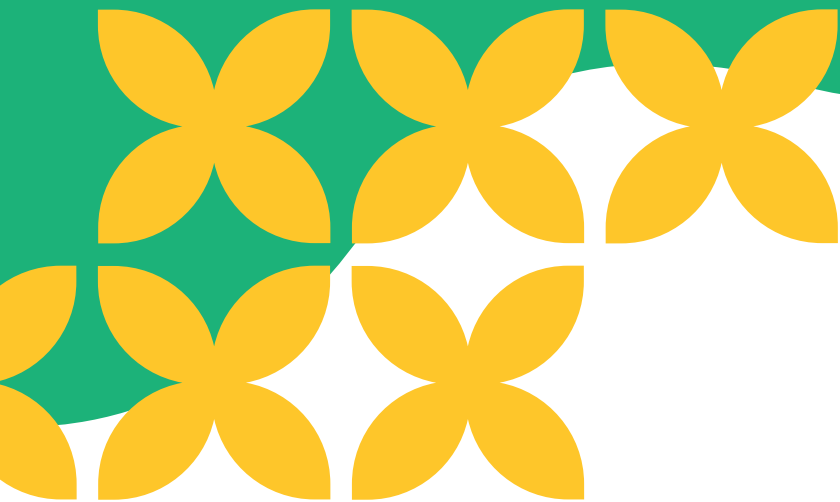
Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand



It's important to prioritise your health this winter.

Taking practical steps, like being vaccinated to make sure you don't get seriously unwell, is the first line of defence this winter.

Get your flu vaccine, COVID-19 booster and make sure your tamariki have all the vaccines they need to protect them from serious illness.

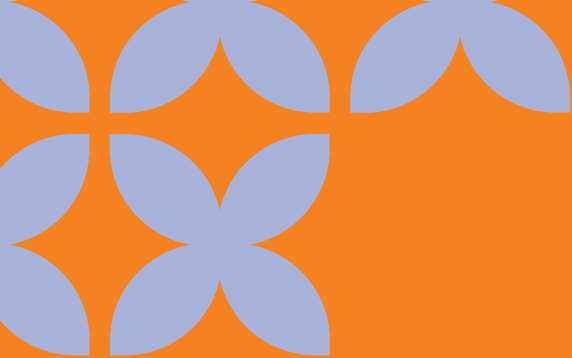


Getting vaccinated is the best way to stay well this winter – so make sure you stay up-to-date with your vaccinations including Influenza, Measles (MMR), COVID-19 and Whooping Cough and make sure tamariki are up to date with all childhood immunisations.

People who are vaccinated are less likely to become seriously unwell or need hospitalisation which ensures health services are available for those who really need urgent care.

Most people can manage their illnesses at home by resting, keeping up their fluids and taking paracetamol or ibuprofen as directed (people taking regular medications should check with a health provider before taking ibuprofen). However, it's important to seek help if your symptoms get worse.

Read on for more helpful advice about looking after yourself at home if you become unwell and preventative measures for staying well this winter.



Planning for winter

It is easier to become ill in cold weather. Being cold can increase your blood pressure, make an existing heart condition worse and increase your chance of catching a cold or having an asthma attack.



Immunise

Vaccination is the best defence against many preventable illnesses.

Make sure you and your whānau are up to date with all available vaccinations such as flu, measles, mumps and rubella (MMR); chicken pox; whooping cough (pertussis); pneumococcal diseases and COVID-19.

Flu

Getting a flu jab helps reduce your risk of getting really sick or having to go to hospital. The vaccination doesn't contain any live flu virus, so it can't actually give you the flu! The flu jab is free for people most at risk of severe illness including:

- Māori and Pacific peoples aged 55 to 64 years
- people aged 65 years and older
- pregnant people (any trimester)
- people aged under 65 years with some health conditions (see link for more info)
- people with serious mental health or addition needs

- children aged 6 months - 12 years inclusive

Note: For eligible tamariki who require two doses of the vaccine, both doses are funded.

Full eligibility information can be found at influenza.org.nz/eligibility/eligibility-criteria

COVID-19

COVID-19 is still circulating in the community. Vaccination means that if you do become infected you are far less likely to fall seriously ill or transmit the virus to others.

COVID-19 and flu (Influenza) are different viruses however it is possible to get both at the same time. Vaccination against both viruses reduces your risk of becoming very unwell due to a co-infection.

Other immunisations

Other vaccine preventable illnesses to watch out for this winter include measles and whooping cough.

Measles is a highly contagious disease that can be life threatening. If your child hasn't been vaccinated against Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR), talk to your GP, nurse or pharmacist about getting protected.

Whooping cough is another highly infectious disease and can be very serious for babies and young children. It is worth talking to your GP, nurse or pharmacist about getting a whooping cough booster if you're about to welcome a baby into the family.

Wellness kits

Prepare a Winter Wellness Kit for you and your whānau:

- paracetamol and ibuprofen (people who have certain medical conditions, or who are taking certain medications should not take ibuprofen.
- If unsure, please consult your health provider to check whether ibuprofen is safe for you)
- a thermometer
- tissues
- enough food and household items for a few days
- regular medicines you or your whānau need
- honey, decongestants and throat lozenges can be helpful to have on hand.

Have a whānau plan

Develop a plan for your whānau so family members know what to do if people become unwell.

Who will help you look after children? Familiarise yourself with what is expected of you by your employer if you become sick yourself. Keep a supply of medication and collect your prescriptions, so that if you do get sick you don't have to leave the house.

Managing illness at home

Symptoms of flu, COVID-19 and other viruses can vary widely. Some people have mild symptoms while others, such as older people and people with high blood pressure, asthma, diabetes or obesity, may feel very unwell or notice their symptoms start to get worse.



Most people will be able to manage illness at home by resting and taking care of themselves including:

- Staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water.
- Taking paracetamol/ibuprofen as directed to reduce aches, pain and fever (people who have certain medical conditions, or who are taking certain medications should not take ibuprofen. If unsure, please consult your health provider to check whether ibuprofen is safe for you).
- Taking honey or lozenges for a sore throat or decongestants for a blocked nose.
- Continuing to take your regular medications.
- Monitoring your symptoms so you notice any changes. Keep a record of your temperature, how you are feeling, your heart rate, breathing rate and any new symptoms you develop.
- Avoid strenuous exercise or high impact activities until you have recovered.

Antiviral medications may be available if you are at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
For more information see covid19.govt.nz

Managing your child's illness at home

Managing your child's illness is similar to managing your own.

If your child has any the symptoms below, please get in touch with your GP or call Healthline on **0800 611 116**. In an emergency, always call **111**.

- Drinking less than 50 percent of normal fluids over the past 24 hours or significantly reduced urine output/wet nappies.
- Behaviour changes, including irritability or lethargy (decreased responsiveness).
- Difficulty breathing, working harder to breathe by sucking in, under, or in between ribs, or breathing rapidly.
- Fever that lasts more than five days.

Seek help early

If you feel your symptoms are getting worse call ahead to stop the spread.

- Call your GP for a phone consultation or your local pharmacy.
- Call Healthline **0800 611 116** to speak to a registered nurse. This is a free service open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If anyone shows any of the following signs **call 111**:

- is struggling to breathe, is too breathless to speak a sentence, or is unable to walk more than five steps due to breathlessness
- is unconscious or unresponsive, has severe dizziness, fainting or is confused
- has collapsed
- has abnormal skin colour, is blue, or a purple spotty rash, or they are cold or clammy
- has chest pain, or severe or unexplained pain not helped by paracetamol or ibuprofen
- is coughing up blood
- has stopped passing urine.



Do I need antibiotics?

The answer is almost always no.

Antibiotics do not work for viruses like flu and COVID-19 or for common side effects of winter illnesses like Sinusitis. Antibiotics are used for infections caused by bacteria, such as pneumonia.

Using antibiotics when they aren't needed can kill off a lot of the good bacteria in your gut, this can mean that bacterial infections in the future could be more resistant to the antibiotics and thus more difficult to treat.

It is normal for your mucus to change from clear to yellow to green or brown over the course of a viral infection as the mucus gets older and fuller of immune cells.

Green or yellow mucus alone doesn't mean you need antibiotics, although if there is blood in your mucus please get in touch with your health provider.

Testing and Isolating

Test for COVID-19 if you have any cold or flu-like symptoms. You can pick up free RATs for yourself and household members from COVID-19 testing centres and collection sites including some pharmacies.

Find a collection centre near you: **healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19** or call 0800 222 478, choose option 3.

Stay home until you are well to stop the spread of viruses in the community.

Try to reduce contact with other people in your household as much as possible and disinfect surfaces to help others avoid the illness.

Find up-to-date self-isolation requirements and information at: **covid19.govt.nz**

Prevention

Colds and flu spread very easily but there are things you can do to protect yourself and your whānau:

- Stay home for 24 hours after your symptoms have resolved.
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and warm water and make sure children do too, especially before eating or touching your face. Viruses can live on surfaces for several hours and hand hygiene is one of the best ways to stop infections.
- Wear a face mask on public transport, and indoor settings such as retail stores and supermarkets, when in poorly ventilated spaces or when it is hard to physically distance from other people.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue and show your children how to do this. Throw all tissues away as soon as possible.

Wearing a mask is one of the best ways to reduce transmission against infectious respiratory illnesses.

Even if you're fully vaccinated, or have had Covid-19/flu, continuing to wear a face mask is very important, particularly when around more vulnerable members of the community such as older or immunocompromised people.



Eat well and stay active

Nutrition and physical activity play an important part in our overall health and wellbeing, including our bodies' ability to fight off illness. Getting a good night's sleep also helps.

When we exercise (even for short periods) we release endorphins which are the body's feel good hormones that relieve stress and can improve your mood.

- When you can, get out in the sun, rug up your tamariki in warm clothes and take them to the park or a walk around the block.

- Try to move around at least once every hour rather than sitting still for long periods.
- Don't over do it, cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart. Remember your body is already working hard just to stay warm.

Well balanced meals will help you stay healthy. Tips for eating to stay well include:

- Eat a variety of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Choose foods that are low in salt with little or no added sugar.
- Fresh food is better for you than overly processed foods.

- A hot meal for lunch will help keep you warm for the afternoon.
- Drink hot drinks to warm you up from the inside.
- Choose foods with unsaturated fats instead of saturated fats.

Keep warm, keep well

Dressing the part and staying warm can help keep you well. Layers of clothing are particularly good in Hawke's Bay as weather often improves throughout the day. Wear a hat and scarf, water resistant footwear and coat.

Healthy homes

Warm and dry homes helps to prevent us getting sick.

Prepare your home, make sure you've got heating, insulation and ventilation.

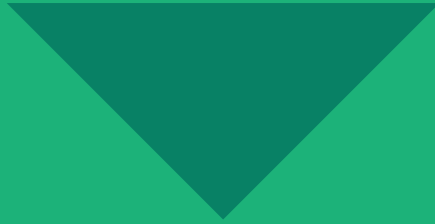
There are a number of things you can do to prepare and keep your home warm and dry:

- Close your curtains just as the sun goes down to capture the heat in your home.
- Stop cold air coming in around windows and doors with draught proofing.
- Open your windows for 20 minutes a day to let fresh air in and damp air out.





- Open kitchen and bathroom windows, especially during and after cooking, showering and bathing.
- Dry your washing outside instead of hanging it inside.
- Wipe condensation off windows to help reduce dampness in your home.
- Check damper areas of your home for mould such as around window frames and corners of the rooms. Mould spores can be killed simply by using white vinegar. Ensure you wear protective gloves and a mask when cleaning mould in your home.



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For more helpful advice about
staying well this winter visit:

[healthify.nz](https://www.healthify.nz)

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