

Schools Health Protection Update

Hertfordshire County Council

Health Protection Update: Autumn Term

Information for Parents/Carers/Guardians

- A guide to keeping kids healthy this school year
- School Vaccinations
- Cold weather preparedness
- Firework & bonfire safety
- Water Safety in cold weather

Next issue due – December 2026

Information for Parents/Carers/Guardians

A guide to keeping kids healthy this school year

As children head back to school and we move closer to winter, now is a good time to familiarise ourselves with some for the common illnesses that can cause disruption to your child's attendance in school over the winter months.

The link below is a blog that covers some illnesses that tend to rise during autumn and winter that highlights steps you can take now and throughout the coming term to help protect your family, including from the cold weather.

A guide to keeping kids healthy this school year for parents and carers – UK Health Security Agency

Caring for Children with Coughs (Polar Bear) leaflet which facilitates self-care and the General-advice-about-antibiotics.pdf leaflet to parents.

NHS Guidance – Is my child too ill for School?

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School Vaccinations

As your child returns to school this autumn, it is important to check their vaccinations are up to date. Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to protect against serious infectious diseases and helps reduce the spread of illness within schools and the wider community. Please check your child's red book, via the NHS app or by asking your GP and if they are missing any vaccinations book an appointment so they can catch up.

This autumn, the School Immunisation Team will be visiting your child's school to offer important vaccinations that help protect children and the wider community. Depending on your child's age and school year, they may be offered the flu vaccine (usually given as a quick nasal spray), the HPV vaccine for Year 8 pupils (given as an injection in the upper arm), and any catch-up vaccinations if they have missed previous routine immunisations. You will receive a consent form via SMS before the session, and we encourage you to complete this as soon as possible. Vaccinations will take place during the school day, delivered by a trained NHS team, with most children in and out within a few minutes. . If your child misses their vaccination, catch-up clinics

will be available, and details will be shared after the school session. Further information can be found here Service details | Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust

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Cold weather Preparedness

As the colder months begin to approach, it can be helpful to spend a little time thinking ahead to winter. Cold weather, snow, ice and strong winds can occasionally affect travel, power supplies and day-to-day routines, so taking a few simple steps now may help make things easier if severe weather arrives.

You may wish to consider checking that your heating system is working well, ensuring warm clothing and extra blankets are readily available, and keeping any essential medicines topped up. It can also be useful to have torches, spare batteries and mobile phones charged, just in case they are needed. Planning ahead for school journeys and keeping an eye on weather forecasts can also help families stay prepared during periods of colder weather.

Some questions you might find helpful to think about as a family include:

- Do we have enough food, medication and household essentials if we needed to stay at home for a few days?
- Is our heating system working efficiently, and do we know who to contact if we need assistance?
- Does everyone in the family have suitable warm clothing, including hats, gloves and waterproof footwear?
- Have we saved important contact numbers where they can be easily accessed?
- Have we considered how we would travel safely to school or work during icy or snowy conditions?
- Are there neighbours, friends or family members who may appreciate some extra support during periods of severe weather?

A little preparation can go a long way in helping families feel confident and ready for the winter season. Below you will find a selection of resources and information that may help you prepare for winter and other emergency situations.

How to get your home and property winter ready - Met Office

Keeping your home warm this winter - Met Office

Cost of living support: Overview - GOV.UK

Get prepared for emergencies - Prepare

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Firework & bonfire safety

Fireworks are best enjoyed at organised displays run by professionals. If you're planning your own celebration, take simple steps to stay safe:

- Buy fireworks only from reputable retailers and check for a CE or UKCA mark.
- Follow the instructions carefully and store fireworks in a closed box.
- Keep fireworks away from trees, fences, sheds, and buildings.
- Keep children and pets indoors.
- Light fireworks at arm's length using a taper and never return to a lit firework.

If you are having a bonfire, build it well away from property and vegetation, keep water nearby, never leave it unattended, and make sure it is fully extinguished before leaving.

Read more: Firework safety | Hertfordshire County Council

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Winter water safety

As temperatures drop, lakes, ponds, rivers and other bodies of water may begin to freeze. While frozen water can look safe, ice is often much thinner and weaker than it appears. Sadly, every year people and animals fall through ice, putting themselves at serious risk of injury or drowning.

We would like to remind all families of the importance of staying safe around water during the winter months.

Staying Safe Around Frozen Water

Please talk to your children about these important safety messages:

- Never walk, play, or skate on frozen lakes, ponds, rivers, or reservoirs.
- Stay well away from the edge of frozen water, as icy banks can be slippery.
- Do not test the thickness of the ice.
- Adults should set a good example by staying off frozen water themselves.

- Keep dogs on leads near water to prevent them from running onto the ice.
- Never put yourself at risk trying to rescue a pet. In many cases, dogs can find their own way out.

If Someone Falls Through the Ice

If you see someone in difficulty:

- **Call 999 immediately** and provide the exact location, using the what2words app.
- Stay off the ice and do not attempt to go onto it.
- Shout reassurance and encourage the person to remain as calm and still as possible.
- If it is safe to do so, try to reach them from the bank using a rope, pole, branch, or clothing tied together.
- If available, slide a floating object towards them to help them stay afloat.
- Wait for the emergency services and continue to reassure the casualty.

General Water Safety Advice

Whether visiting the coast, a river, lake, reservoir, or pond, everyone should:

- Follow all warning signs and safety notices.
- Stick to designated footpaths and safe viewing areas.
- Take care around slippery surfaces and uneven banks.
- Remember that riverbanks and cliff edges can be unstable.
- Avoid horseplay near water and always look out for friends and family.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.

By working together and reinforcing these important messages, we can help keep children, families, and our community safe throughout the winter season. If an emergency occurs near water, always **call 999 immediately**.

For more information on water safety, please go to Water safety during winter or Winter Water Safety | Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK)