

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday 27th November 2013

For Immediate Release

Take Control of Your Long Term Condition this winter

If you or someone you know or care for has a long term condition, such as: asthma, diabetes, heart disease, COPD, liver, kidney disease or MS then look after your health this winter by....

Get a flu jab? It can protect you all winter. If you have a long term health condition and you catch flu you're at a greater risk of complications. The flu jab is quick and free for those with underlying health conditions as well as over 65s, pregnant women and carers. Contact your GP surgery to find out details of flu clinics or to book an appointment.

Sounds simple, but visit your pharmacy. The pharmacist will give you advice on the best over the counter medication for common winter complaints such as coughs and colds that suit your condition and medication you may already be taking. They will also advise you about what remedies to keep in your medicine cabinet – from pain relief, to antiseptic cream and plasters for minor cuts and bruises. You can find out which pharmacies are close to you by visiting www.nhs.uk.

Catch it, kill it, bin it. Almost everyone will have a cough or cold at some point this winter. Don't spread your germs. Cough or sneeze into a tissue, put it in the bin and wash your hands to stop the spread of germs. It really is that simple. Use symptom relief from the pharmacy and take plenty of rest. The GP won't be able to prescribe anything to help.

Cold outside? It's the perfect excuse to eat well and wrap up warm. Keep warm inside and out, by keeping active and having regular hot drinks and nutritious meals. If you have breathing problems even a small change in temperature can affect you. So take extra care.

Think ahead. Make sure that you have enough medication to last when your GP surgery may be closed. It's important that you book any routine appointments with your

practice in plenty of time and ensure that you have enough medication to last you over these times. Don't use A&E as a back-up pharmacy, plan ahead.

Know when NHS services near your home are open. A&E and GP aren't your only options. You'll often be seen quicker at other NHS services, so check out NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk) for your nearest pharmacy, walk-in centre or minor injuries unit. It's better to do this first, rather than face a long wait in A&E. Alternatively if it's urgent, but not an emergency, and you're not sure what to do, call NHS 111.

Personalised Care Plan? It's a good idea for those with a long term condition to have an up-to-date personalised care plan. A care plan will help you manage your condition better - especially during the cold weather. It will also help loved ones know what you to do if you do need medical attention. If you're not sure if you have a Personalised Care Plan, contact your GP for more information.

Dr Steve Mann, Local GP and Clinical Lead at Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "If you have a long-term health condition it is really important that you look after yourself as winter approaches. By planning ahead and taking a few simple steps, you can ensure you stay healthy and on top of your condition. No-one likes being ill or wants to spend time in hospital; so we all need to take responsibility and look after ourselves as best we can.

"A&E is meant for real emergencies and saving lives. We need to remember that A&E, and dialling 999, are emergency services that should only be used in the event of a serious injury, or when someone shows the symptoms of critical illness.

"The right NHS services are everywhere – we just need to stop and think – and then choose the right one."

ENDS

Note to editors

If it's urgent, but not an emergency, you can ring 111 to get health advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including bank holidays. Calls to 111 are free from both landlines and mobiles.

Visit www.nhs.uk to find your nearest GP, walk-in centre or pharmacy, or get health information.

For further information, please e-mail Lindsey Harding on 01384 321677 or Lindsey.Harding@dudley.nhs.uk