

Packed with useful
information to help
you stay healthy

Your guide to...

Staying well in Hertfordshire

All the numbers
you need!

Hello,

As the nights draw in and it starts getting colder, we want to help older people in Hertfordshire to stay healthy, warm and happy this winter.



Dr Prag Moodley Dr Nicolas Small

This booklet contains advice on how to keep yourself active and well-fed and make your home safe. There's also health information to help you look after yourself and know who to contact if you feel unwell.

As local doctors we want you to know that the NHS is always here to help. It's really important that you get in touch with your GP practice if you're feeling unwell or if something changes in your health.

Please read this booklet and keep it somewhere safe so you can look back on it later if you need to.

GP practices are open!

Although GP practices are working differently because of COVID-19, they are very much open and here to help you with your health concerns.

Please phone or go online to contact your surgery first – rather than just popping in as you might have done in the past, and the doctor or nurse will call you back. If you are invited into the surgery, practice staff will make your appointment safe for you.



GP practice services online

If you have the internet at home or on a smartphone or tablet, it's a great way to contact your surgery. No waiting in a phone queue, just visit your practice website where you'll find a form to complete. Your GP or practice nurse will read it and get in touch with you before the end of the next working day.



Alethea Donnelly,
a dietitian from
Hertfordshire
Independent
Living Service has
some top tips to

keep you and your loved ones
healthy this winter.

As we get older, our appetites can get smaller and we sometimes feel less thirsty, meaning that we can forget to eat or drink enough.

This can lead to issues with your health and put you at more risk of falling.

Staying hydrated

Most of us remember to drink regularly in hot weather, but it's just as important to do this during the winter. Keep a jug of water, juice, or whatever you enjoy, topped up and aim to drink 6-8 cups per day. Hot drinks like tea, coffee, or even soup are also good ways to stay hydrated... and they will warm you up too.

Eating for health

It's chilly outside, so eating foods like soups and pies with hot gravy can help you to stay well-nourished. Add sauces, or make your meals richer by adding butter and cream, to give you more energy. This is a great way to make sure that you are getting enough nutrients.



Eating for Health

Try and make sure your meals are healthy and balanced, with protein, dairy, carbohydrates, fruit and veg. If you struggle to keep weight on, have regular snacks during the day.

Need more help? If you find it hard to prepare your own food safely, Hertfordshire Independent Living Service (HILS) offers an affordable meals-on-wheels service.

Diabetics, vegetarians and those on special diets are all catered for. A choice of breakfasts, hot lunches and tea-time meals can be safely delivered to your door whenever you need them.

Call 0330 2000 103 or email:
info@hertsindependentliving.org

Living well with a long term condition

Living with a health condition 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 might need additional help with your long term condition.

If you think something has changed with your health, don't just ignore it, please talk to your GP who can advise on what's best. Call your GP practice and make an appointment to speak to someone.

Here is some helpful advice from Dr Moodley 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.** It can trigger your airways into spasm, causing wheezing, shortness of breath and tightness in the chest
- **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



- **Carry your blue reliever inhaler with you every day**, in case you feel your symptoms flaring up
- **Make an urgent appointment to see your GP or asthma nurse if:**
 - you feel more breathless
 - are coughing/wheezing more
 - you haven't been sleeping well
 - your chest feels tighter
 - you are using your blue inhaler three times a week or more

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 or nurse if you are confused about what to take and when. You might find that using a pill organiser is helpful.

- **Take things easy** – breaking down a big task like gardening into lots of smaller parts can help you manage it more easily
- **Cutting down** on caffeine, alcohol and salt on your food can help
- If breathing at night is difficult then try **propping yourself up on pillows**
- **A healthy, balanced diet** can help improve your symptoms and general health.

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 short of breath
- a dry, hacking cough
- increasing tiredness or feeling tired all the time.

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 glucose levels.

Being active will lower your blood sugar level. You should aim for around 2 – 3 hours of activity a week. You can be active anywhere. Even gardening or housework counts.

Don't forget those check ups!

It's really important if you have diabetes to get your eyes and feet examined by a specialist once a year. You will also be checked for high blood pressure, heart and kidney disease.

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



It's been the strangest of years. We've all had to change the way we live our lives and stop doing some of the things we enjoy. This is why it's so important to keep looking after yourself.

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've got 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.



Try a new craft or hobby – if you are housebound, maybe try jigsaws, card making, model making or crochet. Or learn some new technology skills?

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. Activity indoors can still lift your mood, reduce stress and keep those joints from becoming too stiff. There are simple exercises on page 13.

Don't suffer in silence if you're feeling alone. Social prescribers at your GP practice can help. There are also friendly volunteers you can have a chat with at any time. For a cheerful chat, try Silver Line on **0800 470 80 90**.

See the back page for organisations which can help.



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.

Dr Mark Andrews said:
“If you're feeling forgetful or you feel anxious about someone who is, 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.”

Hertswise offer groups across the county for people with memory loss or dementia and carers, providing support and information. **Contact via HertsHelp on 0300 123 4044.**





Health help on the high street

The health service is still open for you. You might be worried about the strain the NHS is under or be avoiding the GP or hospital because of COVID-19. But your medical needs are just as important as before. If you're not feeling well, please don't put off asking for help.

Heading to a local pharmacy is an easy way to speak to a health professional about your non-COVID symptoms.

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

They can offer clinical advice and over-the-counter medicines for a range of minor illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats, tummy trouble and aches and pains.

If symptoms suggest it's something more serious, pharmacists have the right training to make sure you get the help you need. For example

they 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. Remember to get your repeat prescription request in to your GP early!

Many pharmacies are open until late and at weekends. You don't need an appointment. There are around 200 pharmacies across Hertfordshire and most have a private consultation room where you can discuss issues without being overheard.

Top tip! Ask your pharmacist about their delivery service.

7 symptoms you should never 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 to your health or a new symptom, call your GP surgery so they can investigate. Dr Nicolas Small takes us through some of the important symptoms we should always take seriously.

1. Unexplained weight loss

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

2. Unusual lumps and bumps

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

3. Sensitive skin

Is your skin unusually pale? Has a mole changed shape or got bigger? Have you got a sore that is not healing? If so, call your practice.

4. Think FAST!

If you or a loved one show any symptoms of a stroke, even if they go away, please don't delay. Call 999. Don't write it off as a 'funny turn', 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

5. Cough! Cough!

A lingering cough is not only a sign of COVID - it could also be a symptom of cancer, especially if it lingers longer than a month. If your throat always feels hoarse, or it hurts to swallow, please get yourself seen.

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 blue

The NHS wants to hear from you if you feel sad or anxious. Call the wellbeing service on 0800 6444 101.



Keeping your home warm

Being cold isn't just uncomfortable - it can also be bad for your health.

If you feel cold, turn up the heat. Low temperatures increase the risk of catching flu as well as having a heart attack or stroke. Try and keep your living room at around 21°C (70°F) and your bedroom at least 18°C (64°F).

Tips to keep the chill out...

- Close the curtains at dusk
- Shut the doors of rooms you're not using
- Eat warm meals and drink hot drinks
- Wear several thin layers of clothing
- Get your boiler serviced annually to make sure it doesn't break down when you need it most.

To find a gas engineer, contact the Gas Safe Register on 0800 408 5500. If you rent, check if your landlord has arranged this.

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

You can also get advice on paying bills and benefits you might be entitled to. **Contact HertsHelp on 0300 123 4044 and quote 'HOME'** if you are worried about any of these issues.



Herts Careline
Because independence
is important

Keeping your loved one
safe and reassured
24/7 this winter

Herts Careline provides community alarm services. You are given a wearable pendant which can be pressed day or night. Call 0300 999 2 999 to find out more.

www.care-line.co.uk

Coping through COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic has made everyday life really challenging, particularly for those who have lost friends to the virus or who feel isolated or cut-off from loved ones.

If you can get out and about, then remember the golden rules – **wash your hands thoroughly and regularly, keep a safe distance from others and wear a clean face covering** – unless you're exempt.



Inspiring stories in challenging times

Although strenuous efforts are being made to develop a vaccine, COVID will clearly continue to play a part in our lives for some time to come. We asked NHS volunteers to tell us how they have coped, despite having experienced some tough times in lockdown.



“When my husband was told he had to shield, of course that meant me as well! I have always painted, but for the past couple of years didn't find the time. But when life took on a different perspective through shielding I suddenly had the motivation to get back to it. It has proved to be the best thing - painting is a positive activity and in a way a meditation as I only concentrate on my art.” *Susan*



“We discovered the physical and mental benefits of Adriene's *YouTube Yoga for Seniors*. It helped us through the dark days of the Coronavirus lockdown and knowing Adriene is there for us makes us feel more confident.” *Michael and Felicity*



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?

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

For advice about things that can help you stay independent, like grab rails or shower seats, contact HertsHelp on 0300 123 4044.

Here are some tips to reduce your risk of falling:

- Remove clutter and trip hazards such as loose cables and rugs
- Check slippers and shoes fit well and have a good grip
- Put a lamp beside your bed – to help you see if you need to get up
- Get up slowly and steadily if you wake in the night to go to the toilet
- Stay active – gentle walking and gardening are great for this

Do you feel dizzy when you stand up? Dr Small says: “If you feel light-headed when you stand up or you get out of bed, get your blood pressure checked.

“Sometimes a drop in blood pressure can happen when you move suddenly. It is more common in older people and there are things you can do to reduce symptoms. We don't want you falling over when you get up in the night.”

If you think you have this issue, your doctor may need to review your medication. Don't stop taking any medicines without talking to your GP first.

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/falls
www.HCPAstopfalls.info

Keeping active

Regular gentle exercise can improve your mental, physical and emotional health. If you're not able to get out much, these are some simple moves that most people can do at home if they are still mobile.

Ankle activators

This exercise loosens the ankle joint

- Place one foot in front, with the heel on the floor
- Lift your foot and place your toes where your heel originally was
- Repeat x 4 on 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 with control, and repeat x 10



Sit to stand

- Sit near the front of the chair with feet positioned slightly back
- Lean forwards slightly 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 x 10



Flu vaccinations available now

Did you know? The flu virus spreads from person to person, even when someone doesn't have any symptoms.

Hertfordshire's GP practices and pharmacies have pulled out all the stops this year to make sure that having your flu vaccination is quick, convenient and very safe.

Some practices are holding drive-through flu clinics, or using local theatres and football stadiums – all to enable social distancing and make things safe for both you and practice staff.

Your surgery will contact you if you are eligible for a free flu jab and explain their own arrangements, so please follow the instructions they give you.

www.nhs.uk/flujab

Be scam savvy!

A scam is a scheme designed to con you out of your money. If you let down your guard and think that you won't be fooled, then you could become a victim.

Spot a scam

Remember it could be a scam if:

- The call, letter, email or text has come out of the blue
- You've never heard of the lottery/competition they are talking about and didn't buy a ticket
- They are asking you to send money in advance
- They are telling you to respond quickly so there isn't time to think about it, or talk to family and friends before you decide
- They tell you to keep it a secret.

If you have been a victim, or you think someone has tried to scam you, report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or the police on 101.



Say no to doorstep callers

Hertfordshire Trading Standards and the Police are advising residents to always say no to traders that turn up uninvited on the doorstep. If someone tries to offer you a service you don't want, it's ok to say 'No thank you' and close the door.

Here's some more advice:

- Only deal with callers by appointment
- Always ask for ID and check it carefully
- Keep front and back doors locked
- Fit a door chain and use it
- Don't keep large sums of money at home.

If you need a tradesperson, visit Trading Standards on this website: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/goodtrader or call the Citizens Advice Consumer Service for free on 0808 223 1133.

Fire safety

It's important to feel safe and warm at home. These tips can protect you and your home from fire.

- Fit a smoke alarm on each floor of your home
- Test smoke alarms monthly or ask a friend to do it. Change the battery every year
- If you have hearing or vision problems, get a specialist smoke alarm
- Open fire? Use a fireguard and have the chimney swept at least once a year
- Don't dry clothes over or near a fire or electric heater
- Never leave a cooking pan unattended
- Stub any cigarettes out completely - never smoke in bed.

Did you know?

E-cigarettes are safer than smoking. **If you want to quit, the Hertfordshire Stop Smoking Service can help. Call 0800 389 3998.** Being smoke-free makes a fire less likely. It also means a cleaner home, a reduced risk from COVID-19 and healthier and happier pets.

Electric blankets can cause a fire if not used properly. Remember:

- Store them flat when not in use, with nothing on top of them
- Check any new blanket you buy has 'overheat protection' to cut off the electricity if it overheats
- Ensure it has the British Standards Kitemark.

Over blankets are designed to be left on, but under blankets must be switched off before getting into bed.

Don't use an electric blanket...

- ...if it has scorch marks or exposed elements.
- ...alongside a hot water bottle, even if the blanket is switched off.

For a free fire safety visit, call **0300 123 4046** or visit www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/SAFEANDWELL



**If there's a fire, get out, stay out and call 999.
Never try to fight a fire or go into a burning building.**

If you need extra help...

In an emergency always dial 999

- **HertsHelp** is a free service which can put you in touch with practical help and emotional support in your area. You or your carer may also be eligible for support, discounts or certain benefits which could help with paying bills.
Call: 0300 123 4044 **Email:** info@hertshelp.net
Visit: www.hertshelp.net
- **Information for carers:** www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/carers
- **Adult Care Services:** Social services and resources for adults
Call: 0300 123 4042 **Email:** contact@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Visit: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/adults
- **For fire safety advice / book a FREE Safe & Well visit:** 0300 123 4046
- **For urgent mental health support,** dial 111 and choose option 2
- **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

Before travelling to an A&E department, urgent care centre or minor injuries unit, call NHS 111 first. They can make sure you go to the best place for your symptoms and even book some types of appointment if you need one - so you don't have to sit in a busy waiting room for a long time.



NHS East and North Hertfordshire CCG

www.enhertsccg.nhs.uk

NHS Herts Valleys CCG

www.hertsvalleysccg.nhs.uk

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