

October 2012 update

Pregnant women offered whooping cough jab

Pregnant women across Wiltshire are being offered the whooping cough vaccination, following a national increase in the number of cases.

The vaccination will boost short term immunity passed on by women to their babies while they're still in the womb. Newborns will still need to be vaccinated between two and four months of age, so that they continue to be protected.

GPs will be giving the vaccination to women who are at least 28 weeks pregnant, in order to optimise its effectiveness.

Whooping cough – or pertussis is a highly contagious bacterial infection of the lungs and airways. The condition usually begins with a persistent dry and irritating cough which progresses to intense bouts of coughing. These are followed by a distinctive 'whooping' noise.

The Department of Health is encouraging all women who are 28 weeks pregnant or more to have the vaccination because immunity from the vaccine will pass to your baby through the placenta, helping to protect them in their first few weeks of life

If you're approaching 28 weeks pregnant or more, please contact your GP practice to find out more about the vaccine and book an appointment to receive it.

For more information on the whooping cough vaccine in pregnancy, visit the NHS Choices website: <http://www.nhs.uk/Planners/vaccinations/Pages/Adultshub.aspx>

Keep warm and well

Now that the clocks have changed and we have already seen temperatures plummet, NHS Wiltshire is urging people to keep warm and well this winter:

“The cold can have serious consequences, increasing the risk of strokes and heart attacks as well as colds and flu,” says Medical Director Peter Jenkins; “Wrapping up warm, keeping the heating turned up and keeping a well-stocked medical cabinet incase you do catch a cold or flu are all sensible steps to take.”

“It's particularly important to stay indoors during very cold weather if you have a respiratory illness – and all elderly people should avoid going out on icy pavements. This means staying at home until later in the morning when the ice has melted. Even if you have a doctor's appointment first thing, try and reschedule it for later – your surgery will usually be happy to help with this. It's better to wait than risk falling on the ice.”

NHS Wiltshire has produced five top tips on staying warm and well this winter.

1. **Keep your home warm** – set your central heating to between 65 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit (18-21 degrees centigrade). Heat the room you sit in during

- the day to 70 degrees, and your bedroom to 65 degrees. When it's very cold (as it is at present), set the heating to come on earlier so that you're not waiting for your home to warm up.
2. **Have your flu jab.** Everyone over 65, or with a wide variety of health conditions, is entitled to one free of charge. Immunity takes effect almost immediately, so even though a flu outbreak is currently well underway, you can still protect yourself by getting the jab – just call your GP to make an appointment.
 3. **If you do fall ill with flu, it's best to stay at home.** Flu is caused by a virus, and cannot be treated with antibiotics – so a visit to your GP is not necessarily the best course of action.
 4. **Vomiting and diarrhoea bugs** caused by norovirus are common and very infectious. This can be a very unpleasant condition, but the best advice is to stay at home and drink plenty of fluids until the symptoms pass. Norovirus is highly infectious, with an incubation period of between one and three days. For that reason, you should wait 48 hours after symptoms have stopped before going back to work or school.
 5. **Keep a well-stocked medicine cabinet**, with supplies of ibuprofen, paracetamol and your favourite cold remedy at hand.

Where to go when you're ill

The following points should be helpful when deciding who to contact.

- Pharmacies offer over-the-counter medicines and advice. As well as being open during regular retail hours, they operate an out-of-hours service on a rota basis;
- Call NHS Direct for advice on 0845 46 47 or go to www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk. They can give a wide range of advice and information about many conditions;
- Use the minor injuries units at Chippenham and Trowbridge for cuts, burns and other injuries – but not for colds, flu or vomiting;
- Make an appointment with your own GP - an out-of-hours service is also available;
- If it is a genuine emergency, go to your local A&E department or call 999 for an ambulance.

The next PCT Cluster Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday 28 November at 10am in the Conference Room, Southgate House, Pans Lane, Devizes.

Members of the public are welcome to attend. Papers are published a week before the meeting on www.wiltshire.nhs.uk or on request from Stacey Saunders, NHS Wiltshire, email: stacey.saunders@wiltshire.nhs.uk