

Natalie Liddle
Head of Service Health Protection
Lincolnshire County Council
County Offices
Newland
Lincoln LN1 1YL

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Dear Parent(s) / Carer(s),

RE: Increase in respiratory illnesses

We are writing to inform you of a recent increase in respiratory illnesses such as colds, flu, Covid-19, and RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus). While it's not uncommon for viruses to spread at this time of year, there are simple steps people can take to reduce the transmission of Covid-19, flu, and other respiratory infections.

To reduce the risk of spreading winter illnesses:

- **Boost your immunity this winter.** It is not too late for you and your children to receive a vaccination against COVID-19 and flu this year. It is one of the best ways to protect not only you but your friends and family. To find out how to book, speak to your GP practice or nearest pharmacy.
- **Seek advice from your local pharmacy.** If you or your child start to feel unwell with a winter illness, your local pharmacy can be a good source of support and can advise you on what steps to take to relieve your symptoms.
- **Wash your hands often.** Please remember it is really important to encourage your child to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to help prevent the spread of winter illnesses.
- **Try to stay at home.** If you or your child are feeling unwell it is important to avoid contact with other people until you are well enough to undertake your normal activities.

Managing symptoms and when to get help

If you or your child develop flu-like symptoms, such as a fever, feeling tired or exhausted, a cough, a sore throat, or a headache, there are some things you can do to help get better more quickly:

- rest and sleep

- keep warm
- take paracetamol or ibuprofen to lower your temperature and treat aches and pains
- drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration

When to keep your child off school

With children returning to school this week, it is important that parents and carers help minimise the spread of infection in schools and other childcare settings as much as possible. If your child is unwell and has a fever, they should stay home from school or nursery until they feel better, and the fever has resolved.

When to seek additional help

Most respiratory illnesses are mild and clear up within 2 to 3 weeks without the need for treatment. We have included a helpful information sheet on the **next page** which will help you care for your child and includes advice on when to seek extra help and treatment. If in doubt, please refer to [NHS 111 online](#).

Yours sincerely,



Natalie Liddle
Head of Service – Health Protection

Enclosed: Respiratory Illnesses Self-Care Checklist

Resources

[Get help for your symptoms - NHS 111](#)

[Flu - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Bronchiolitis - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Common cold - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

What should I do if my child has a respiratory illness?

We're seeing an increase in respiratory illnesses at the moment. Many of these illnesses, like bronchiolitis are caused by a virus called respiratory syncytial virus or RSV. Most cases are mild and clear up within 2 to 3 weeks without the need for treatment. But we know it's a worry if your child is unwell so use this guide to help care for them. If in doubt contact NHS111.

If your child has none of the symptoms described in the amber and red boxes below:



SELF CARE

Most children can be cared for at home in the same way that you'd treat a cold. Make sure your child gets enough fluid to avoid dehydration.

You can give infants paracetamol or ibuprofen to bring down their temperature if the fever is upsetting them.

The infection usually clears up within 2 weeks without the need for treatment. If you feel you need advice, visit www.nhs.uk You can also contact your Health Visitor, your local pharmacy, GP surgery or contact NHS111



If your child has any of the following:

Laboured or rapid breathing

Dehydration (sunken eyes, drowsy or not passed urine for more than 12 hours)

A persistent high temperature of 38°C or above

Seems very tired or irritable

Or if you're worried about your child

SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE TODAY

Ring your GP surgery or contact NHS111



If your child has any of the following:

Pauses in their breathing, irregular breathing pattern or starts grunting

Severe difficulty in breathing – too breathless to feed

Tongue or lips are blue

SEEK URGENT HELP

Phone 999 or visit your local A&E