

Accessing health services this winter

The First Minister, John Swinney, chaired a meeting on NHS winter preparedness on Boxing Day, and afterwards he urged everyone to familiarise themselves with the best way to access health services.

Mr Swinney was joined by the Health Secretary, Public Health Minister and representatives from NHS Scotland, Public Health Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service to ensure pressures across the system continue to be effectively managed.

This follows an increase in activity across the health and care system, seen most acutely on the ambulance service, as well as rising cases of influenza A.

Health Secretary, Neil Gray, said: “The festive season is always a challenging time for health and care services and patient safety remains our top priority. While there is acute pressure on the health and care system, in part due to an increase in cases of influenza A, services continue to perform effectively.

“However, in order to support services over the winter period, it is important that everyone familiarises themselves on the best way to access the care they need, such as NHS Inform’s online tools, to get the right advice quickly and ensure that

services such as the ambulance service and A&E can focus on those who need seen urgently.

“We continue to work closely with Health Boards and the Scottish Ambulance Service to maintain a fast response to the most critically unwell, and in these cases people should always dial 999. However, if your condition is not life threatening, you should visit nhsinform.scot or call NHS 24 on 111 first.

“We are also continuing to support our Health Boards in their response to the winter flu season with more than 1.7 million flu and 1 million Covid-19 vaccines having been administered as of 15 December. A selection of clinics will be open between Christmas and New Year and I urge all those who are eligible for vaccinations this winter to come forward as soon as possible to protect themselves against seasonal illnesses.”

- Further advice on how best to protect yourself and others from winter illnesses is available on NHS Inform – [Winter illness | NHS inform](#)
- More information on the winter vaccine programme is available on NHS Inform – [Winter vaccines](#)
- For advice on minor illnesses and injuries, visit www.nhs24.scot.
- Call 111 for urgent but non-life-threatening health concerns.
- Always call 999 in an emergency.



Need help with

WINTER ILLNESS SYMPTOMS?

[NHSinform.scot](https://nhs.uk/information-scotland)