

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025

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Dear Parent and Carers,

**Re: Rising cases of flu, keeping your children well, pharmacy first.**

As is often the case during the winter months, NHS emergency services and hospitals are under increased pressure due to rising cases of flu hospitalisations and a sharp increase in demand for services.

For this reason, I am writing to parents and carers in Southampton to ensure everyone is aware of the local NHS services that are available to them. This will help to ensure that if a child is unwell, parents know how to access the right services at the right time, which will help to reduce pressure on emergency departments.

I'd like to encourage parents and carers to make the best use of your local pharmacy, who are now able to treat five common conditions in children. These conditions are:

- Earache (children aged 1-17)
- Sore throat (over 5s)
- Infected insect bites (over 1s)
- Impetigo (over 1s)
- Sinusitis (aged 12 and over)

If a child is poorly with any of the above conditions, by going straight to a local pharmacy they can have a consultation with a trained pharmacist and receive advice and prescription medication without the need for a GP appointment (if appropriate).

I would also like to highlight [The Healthier Together app](#) which is a great source of information for parents and carers across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The app, which can be easily downloaded, provides parents and carers with information to help keep their child safe and healthy, as well as helping them decide what to do when their child is unwell.

Please also continue to encourage children to **wash their hands regularly** with warm water for 20 seconds, or use hand sanitiser when convenient. This is one of the most effective ways to stop the spread of germs. Alcohol gel doesn't kill all bugs so don't rely on these.

The **seasonal flu vaccination**, which many children are eligible for will also help to protect against infection and severe disease. If your child has not yet been vaccinated, they may still be able to get immunised. See contact details below for further information.

There are lots of viruses that cause sore throats, coughs and colds at this time of year. These should resolve without medical intervention. For most people flu is an unpleasant illness, but for some it can be very dangerous and even life-threatening, particularly for older people, younger

children and those with certain health conditions. As a parent or carer trust your instincts if your child seems seriously unwell.

Contact NHS 111 or your GP if [any of the following apply](#):

- your child is getting worse
- your child is feeding or eating much less than normal
- your child appears dehydrated – not had a wee or wet nappy in last 8 hours
- your child is under 3 months and has a temperature of 38°C or higher
- your child is 3 to 6 months old and has a temperature of 39°C or higher
- your child has a temperature that has lasted more 5 days or shivering with fever (rigors)
- your child has other signs of illness, such as a rash, as well as a high temperature
- your child is very tired or irritable

Call 999 or go to A&E if:

- your child is having difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises or their tummy sucking under their ribs, or too breathless to talk, eat and drink
- there are pauses when your child breathes
- your child's skin, tongue or lips are blue
- your child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake
- your child has a stiff neck or is bothered by light
- your child has a rash that does not fade when you press a glass against it
- your child is not responding like they normally do, or is not interested in feeding or normal activities

Kind regards



**Dr Debbie Chase**  
**Director of Public Health**

**Links and further information:**

- For further information about eligibility and where you can get vaccinated, please go to [Child flu vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk).
- For school aged children you can contact The School Aged Immunisation Service (SCAIS) on Tel: 0300 123 5074 or email [southampton.SAI@solent.nhs.uk](mailto:southampton.SAI@solent.nhs.uk)
- To find out about vaccination for children aged 0-5 please contact your GP.
- For Healthier Together please visit their website at [Home :: Healthier Together](#).
- [Parents and carers urged to help children start New Year healthy - GOV.UK](#)



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[southampton.gov.uk](http://southampton.gov.uk)

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