

Ten Top Tips for staying healthy this winter

It's that time of year that the usual winter pressures begin to build and this year we also have the addition of swine flu.

PCTs across the former Avon area are tackling the usual winter ailments this year by focussing on encouraging people to look after themselves.

As part of this drive, Tony Fielding, a local Bristol GP and Helen Lockett, Bristol Community Health's nursing lead, have joined together to produce 'Ten Top Tips' on staying healthy this winter.

We are asking GPs to be mindful of these tips, particularly not sending patients to A&E when they have diarrhoea and vomiting symptoms. By doing this, you can help take some of the pressure off the acutes during the winter period. This is particularly important now, with the added pressure of swine flu, and its impact on A&E and critical care beds. Here are the 'Top Ten Tips':

1. Keep your hands clean

Wash your hands regularly. Just washing your hands thoroughly can kill off flu or stomach viruses that have gotten on to your hands.

2. Eat well

Make sure that your vitamin intake is better with plenty of vitamin C to help fight off colds and infections. Why not visit your greengrocer and enjoy some good quality, local produce?

3. Get your jab

If you are over 65 or have a long term health condition, ring your GP to have your flu vaccination.

4. Keep warm

Dress appropriately for the weather to maintain a warm body temperature.

5. Get your eight hours

Sleep plays a part in your general health and wellbeing, so try and get a good eight hours sleep per night.

6. Keep active

You may not feel like going out for exercise when it is colder, but regular exercise helps your metabolism and immune system.

7. Keep it handy

Make sure you have over the counter remedies such as paracetamol ready at home. If you do get ill, remember:

8. Catch it, Bin it, Kill it

Sneeze into tissues, bin the tissues safely then wash your hands as soon as possible.

9. Stay in

If you get ill with diarrhoea and sickness, stay at home until 48 hours after the last symptoms.

10. Swine flu

If you think you have swine flu please do not go to your GP for treatment as you may pass the infection to others. Ring the national pandemic flu service number first on 0800 151 3100, or call NHS Direct on: 0845 46 47 or your GP surgery who will operate an out of hours service.

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