

Simple Steps to Keep Older Relatives and Friends Well This Winter

Make sure they have a well-stocked medicine cabinet, with remedies for high temperatures, coughs, colds, sore-throats and upset stomachs. Coughs and colds should begin to improve within a few days, but if you have any concerns take them to see their local pharmacist – don't wait until it gets worse. Check they are up to date with their pneumonia vaccination and have had a flu jab . There's also some useful information about treating the symptoms of coughs and colds available at www.nhs.uk

They need to keep warm. Age UK has some useful general information on this topic; and advice about what to do you have any concerns, for example if they are worried about the costs of heating their home. Go to the Age UK website www.ageuk.org.uk and search for 'preparing for winter'.

Make sure that your relative, or friend stays connected and has regular conversations with other people – even if it's sometimes by phone. Isolation can have a negative impact on someone's emotional and mental health. If you are worried about them Age UK and Silver Line www.thesilverline.org.uk are two charities that offer support for people who may be feeling isolated.

If they have an existing lung condition, such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, speak to the practice nurse or GP to see if it would be useful for them to have an emergency 'Rescue Pack' – medication they can take straight away if their condition starts to get worse.

If you are ill yourself, don't visit for a few days until your symptoms have improved – you don't want to pass on any viruses. Encourage your older friend or relative to regularly wash their hands, especially if they've been out, to minimise the chance of them picking up any germs.

If you have any concerns about them, your GP practice or pharmacist will be happy if you call and ask for advice over the phone. You don't have to wait until the morning or the next working day to speak to someone - support and advice is also available in the evenings, weekends and over the holidays, either from an out of hours GP service or by calling NHS 111.

