

Winter Wellness

Keep your whānau safe and well this winter

Cooler weather means more people are likely to get sick with colds, flu, COVID-19, and other respiratory illnesses, such as whooping cough. With more sick people around, the chances of illnesses being brought into your home, workplace, or school increase. There are several ways to protect yourself and others from infections.



Preventing the spread of illness

- **If you feel sick, stay home** to rest up and prevent spreading germs to others. Make sure you tell other people you are at home. For online advice go to [healthnz.govt.nz](https://www.healthnz.govt.nz). You can also find advice on whether your child is well enough to go to school here: [Knowing if your child is well enough to go to school – guidance for parents and caregivers](#)
- When you are sick, it is especially important to **stay away from people who could get very sick from winter illnesses**, including babies, those who are pregnant, people aged over 65 years, and others with a weak immune system. This includes avoiding visiting friends and family in hospital or rest home until you are well again.
- Keeping your hands clean prevents the spread of germs and viruses. **Regularly wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based sanitiser.** This is especially important if you are visiting people who are more likely to get sick.

To further reduce the spread of infectious illnesses:



Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then put the tissue in a bin and wash your hands.



If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow.



Wear a mask to lower the risk of spreading infectious illness through the air.



Clean frequently touched surfaces, such as light switches and door handles, with household cleaner, regularly.



Let fresh air inside by opening windows and doors several times a day. If you're in a building with a ventilation system, check it is filtering or cleaning the air efficiently.



Visiting an after hours or urgent care clinic

When you need urgent medical help, and your usual doctor isn't available or you don't have one, After Hours Medical Centres and Urgent Care Clinics can help you. You don't need an appointment, but you might have to wait. For tamariki under 14 years old, services are usually free. Many have lower fees for community service card holders. You can find where centres are located, and their charges, on the [Healthpoint](#) website. **In an emergency, always call 111.**



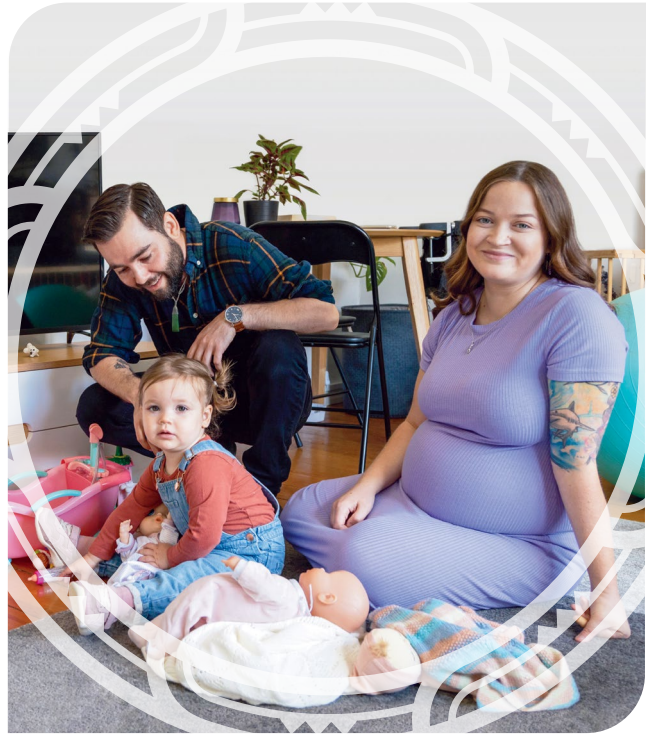
Immunisation

Being immunised is the best way to protect against some preventable diseases.

To book a vaccination, go to [bookmyvaccine](#) or call the Vaccination Helpline **0800 28 29 26** (Monday to Friday 8:30am to 5.00pm) for information, advice, and support. Calls are free, callers can speak with a Māori clinician, and interpreters are available.

Check immunisations for yourself and your whānau for:

- Flu (Influenza)
- Whooping cough (pertussis)
- COVID-19
- Measles
- Routine immunisations as part of the [National Immunisation Schedule](#).



Healthy homes

Warm, dry, and healthy homes can help prevent you and your children from getting sick.

The Healthy Homes Initiative supports eligible families to help make their homes warmer, drier, and healthier by providing education and support such as curtains, carpet and minor repairs as needed.

Visit www.hhi.org.nz to find a local provider and to see if you are eligible.

You may qualify for a subsidy to have your home insulated and/or an efficient form of heating installed in your main living area. To find out, visit eeca.govt.nz.



How to make your home healthier:

- Open your curtains during the day and close them at night.
- Open your windows for at least a few minutes each day and close them again.
- Dry your washing outside or in the garage or carport.
- Let steam out of the kitchen and bathroom by opening windows and doors.
- Wipe off any water that has collected on walls and on the inside of windows.
- Stop cold air getting into your home by stopping draughts around doors, windows, and fireplaces.
- Remove mould from ceilings and walls as soon as possible with white vinegar or household bleach with added water, and dry well. For more information: healthify.nz/hauora-wellbeing/h/homes-why-dampness-and-mould-are-bad-for-your-health



Preventing house fires



Winter is a higher-risk time for house fires. Over the last 10 years, there have been approximately 54 percent more house fires between

May and July than during the rest of the year.

Many of these fires are linked to heating being used more often in winter – for example, heaters placed too close to things that can burn (like clothes being dried), or simply faulty electric blankets.

In addition, more than 50 percent of avoidable house fire deaths are people over 65. So, this winter, here are a few very simple steps you can take to keep yourself and your loved ones safe.

Just remember to:

- **Follow the “metre from the heater” rule** – keep at least one metre of clear space around heaters and other heat sources.
- **Check the heat before you sleep** – check your electric blanket for hot spots before first use.
- **Chimney alright before first light?** – get your chimney cleaned before the first fire of the season.
- **Cool ash before you stash** – soak with water in a metal bucket.
- **A clean dryer avoids fire** – remove lint before every use.

It is also important that people have working smoke alarms in every bedroom, living room and hallway. This will give you the earliest possible warning to escape.



Choose the right healthcare for you and your whānau

If you do get sick there are many ways to get help for your health, whatever the time of day or night, for you and your whānau. Some options are:



Pharmacy

Your local pharmacy can give you advice on medicines and common health problems like coughs and colds, they can recommend treatments, fill prescriptions, and some provide immunisations.



Healthline

Healthline is a free over-the-phone health service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – you can call Healthline for free health advice from a Registered Nurse on **0800 611 116**. You can also register for a call back at info.health.nz/healthline



Health Provider

Call your GP, Hauora Māori or Pacific Health Provider to get support for you and your whānau from a doctor or nurse.



Telehealth Services

Phone or video GP appointment is a good option if you don't have a doctor or can't visit one. Visit: healthnz.govt.nz/online-phone-healthcare/online-gp-care
Call Ka Ora for an after-hours video and phone service if you live in a rural area – call **0800 252 672** or visit healthnz.govt.nz/kaora

Need more help?

You can call Healthline for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 0800 611 116. Talk to your General Practitioner (GP), pharmacist, hauora Māori provider, or Pacific health clinic.