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PRESS RELEASE

KEEP WARM, KEEP WELL THIS WINTER

In Thurrock last year, around 70 more people died during the winter compared to the summer months, and so with the weather forecast predicting a continuation of the current cold spell, NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is reminding residents to keep warm and keep well over the next few weeks.

An estimated 43,900 excess winter deaths occurred in England and Wales in 2014/15; the highest number since 1999/00, with 27% more people dying in the winter months compared with the non-winter months.

The majority of deaths occurred among people aged 75 and over; there were an estimated 36,300 excess winter deaths in this age group in 2014/15, compared with 7,700 in people aged under 75.

Some of the reasons for these include slips and trips on icy ground where fractured and broken bones led to further complications such as blood clots and pressure sores. But respiratory diseases were the underlying cause of death in more than a third of all excess winter deaths in 2014/15.

It has been estimated that for every degree change in the average weather temperature, there is a rise or fall in the number of deaths which is why it is vital people, particularly the elderly and those with respiratory conditions keep warm and safe.

One of the best ways of keeping well during winter is to stay warm. NHS Thurrock CCG is providing five top tips. Some may seem obvious, but they could help you to stay warmer and maintain good health over the coming weeks.

1. **Heat your home well**
   By setting your heating to the right temperature (between 18-21°C) you can still keep your home warm and lower your bills. If you feel cold at night, use a hot water bottle or electric blanket – but never use both together. It is especially important if you’re at home all day.
2. **Eat well and have plenty of fluids**
   Food and water are vital sources of energy, and they help keep your body warm. Try to make sure you and your family have hot meals and drinks regularly throughout the day.

3. **Get a flu jab**
   You can get free flu jabs to protect against seasonal flu from your GP or local pharmacy if you are over 65, pregnant, or have a long-term condition.

4. **Look after yourself and others**
   On cold days try to avoid going outside. However, if you do need to go out, remember to wrap up warm and take care on slippery surfaces. If you have an older neighbour or relative, look out for them during the winter to make sure they are safe and well.

5. **Keep your medicine cabinet well stocked**
   If you’re on medication, make sure you get your repeat prescriptions in time so you don’t run out. If you haven’t already, talk to your GP practice about registering for Patient Online. Simply complete the paperwork and you’ll be able to request repeat prescriptions online as well as make GP appointments. Check to make sure you have enough over the counter remedies for coughs and colds so you don’t need to leave home unless you have to.

Dr Anand Deshpande, Chair of NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group, said: “Encouraging people to keep warm and healthy during the winter is one of our key priorities, particularly for older residents and those that spend all day at home.

“Our five top tips show that it only takes a few simple measures to protect yourself and your family from winter-related illnesses and incidents.”

For more information on staying well this winter log onto [www.nhs.uk/staywell](http://www.nhs.uk/staywell)

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**Notes to editors**
For further information, please email: [thurrock.ccg@nhs.net](mailto:thurrock.ccg@nhs.net)

For further information about Thurrock CCG, visit our website at: [http://www.thurrockccg.nhs.uk](http://www.thurrockccg.nhs.uk)