

Be breast aware and get checked early

All women are urged to be 'breast aware' and get screened when invited. It's vital to recognise the signs and symptoms of breast cancer, and to get checked early.

Breast screening

Prevention and early detection are key to saving lives from breast cancer.

All women who are invited for breast screening are encouraged to think about going.

Most women will have normal mammograms. Out of every 100 women who attend for screening, around four are asked to come back for further tests. Most of them will have a normal result.

There is information about screening on the page below.

Screening remains the best way of detecting breast cancer at an early stage when treatment can be more effective.

Signs and symptoms

It is important for women to look out for changes in the appearance of their breasts, such as:

- a change in size or outline of either breast, especially those caused by arm movement
- any puckering, dimpling or redness of the skin
- veins that stand out more than usual

Women should be aware of any feelings of pain or discomfort in one part of either the breast or armpit, particularly if it is new and persistent.

Women should also look and feel for any lumps or thickening in either breast that feels different from the other breast, as well as any swelling or lumps under the armpit or around the collarbone.

Also look out for any changes to the nipple, such as a nipple that:

- has become pulled in
- has changed shape
- has a discharge
- bleeds
- has a rash or has crusted, flaky skin

If the change is due to cancer, earlier detection may mean simpler and more successful treatment.

Many changes are harmless but all should be checked by a GP.

You can find out more on the [breast cancer page](#).

While breast cancer is much more common in women, it can also affect men. In rare cases it develops in the small amount of breast tissue men have behind their nipples.

More useful links

Share this page

Using antibiotics wisely is everyone's responsibility

It's everyone's responsibility to use antibiotics responsibly. They are not effective against viral infections, including colds and flu. Antibiotic overuse is a serious problem and a potentially a threat to everyone's health. You should be guided by your GP or pharmacist as to whether or not you need an antibiotic.

How we can all help

[Antibiotic resistance](#) is a threat to human health and to medicines worldwide. Overuse and misuse of antibiotics could mean that in the future even the simplest infections cannot be treated and the most straightforward operations cannot be done.

This is an issue that affects every single one of us and could have devastating consequences. It is vital that we tackle this problem urgently so we can safeguard the health of ourselves, our children, and future generations.

Antibiotics should only be used for serious bacterial infections.

Some of the easy ways to help:

- practice good hand hygiene to help prevent the spread of infection in the first place – wash your hands after using the bathroom, before preparing or eating food, after coughing or sneezing, or if your hands are visibly dirty
- if you don't need antibiotics, for instance for [viral infections](#) like a cold or flu, don't take them
- speak to your GP or pharmacist before you ask for an antibiotic – don't demand antibiotics from your GP, they will make the decision on whether

you need them or not

- if you're prescribed antibiotics, finish the course or medication (even if you start to feel better)
- never share antibiotics with anyone else

You can find more information about using antibiotics wisely at this link:

Colds or flu

If you have a cold or flu, antibiotics will not work. Most coughs, sore throats and earaches do not need antibiotics. Your body can usually fight these infections on its own.

Taking unnecessary antibiotics for conditions like these will contribute to them becoming less effective in being able to tackle the illnesses for which they were developed.

The first place to get advice is from your pharmacist. There are things you can get over the counter to look after yourself during your illness and ease the symptoms until it passes.

If you're worried, contact your GP's surgery, who will be able to advise on the best treatment for you.

You can find useful information on the pages below:

Antibiotics and pets

If you own a pet, there are some useful tips to help use antibiotics responsibly:

- keep your pet healthy to help it fight infection – provide food with a high nutritional value, have it vaccinated regularly and if it gets sick take it to your vet immediately
- do not share antibiotics between pets or re-use tablets for an earlier illness – human medicines should not be given to pets as they could be dangerous and ineffective
- make sure that suspected disease is accurately diagnosed – consult your vet early
- not every condition needs to be treated with antibiotics so don't expect antibiotics from your vet as they may not be needed
- if your vet does prescribe antibiotics it will be after a clinical assessment and they will decide which antibiotic, at what dose and for how long is correct
- follow the advice given by your vet and use any antibiotics prescribed as instructed on the label
- complete the full course prescribed by your vet even if the animal gets better after a few doses
- always take your vet's advice and comply with instructions provided for the administration of and disposal of unused medication

Using antibiotics in agriculture

Antibiotics are essential medicines for treating bacterial infections in animals. Everyone [using antibiotics in agriculture](#) should make sure they are used responsibly to ensure they remain effective.

Livestock owners are urged to take every possible action to prevent disease by having good farm management, biosecurity, and animal husbandry. This will help reduce the need for antibiotics.

More useful links

[Strong winds warning – information and advice](#)

With a weather warning for strong winds, there could be travel delays, risk of injury or danger to life from flying debris large waves in coastal areas, damage to buildings, fallen trees, and power cuts.

Weather warning

The Met Office has sent out a [weather warning for strong winds](#).

Weather warnings let the public and emergency services know about potentially hazardous conditions.

You can find out more about weather warnings on [the Met Office website](#).

Emergency numbers

You should note the following numbers in case of emergency:

- Emergency services – 999 or 112
- Northern Ireland Electricity Networks – 03457 643 643
- NI Gas Emergency Service – 0800 002 001
- Northern Ireland Water Waterline – 03457 440 088
- Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100
- Housing Executive – 03448 920 901

Report a fallen tree or blocked road

You can report a fallen tree or blocked road at the following link:

Reporting a power cut

If your power is off and you want to report it or get more information, contact NIE Networks or visit their website:

You can find an updated list of areas affected by power cuts on the [NIE Networks website](#).

Flooding advice

If any flooding happens, you can report it by phoning the Flooding Incident Line on 0300 2000 100.

There is general flooding advice in the following section:

Roads information

You can get the latest updates about roads at this link:

School closures

You can find information about school closures at this link:

Public transport

For the latest information on bus and train services, go to the 'Travel update' section on the [Translink website](#).

Forests, country parks and nature reserves

You're advised not to visit forests, [country parks](#) and [nature reserves](#) until the strong winds weather warning is over due to the increased risks of fallen trees, branches and debris.

Advice for road users

All road users are asked to pay attention to any road signs and temporary arrangements put in place during severe weather. Longer journey times or cancellations are possible as road, rail, air and ferry services are affected, with the chance that some roads and bridges could close.

High-sided vehicles are most affected by windy weather, but strong gusts can also blow a car, cyclist, motorcyclist or horse rider off course. This can happen on open stretches of road exposed to strong cross winds, or when passing bridges or gaps in the hedges.

In very windy weather a vehicle may be affected by turbulence created by large vehicles. Motorcyclists are particularly affected, so keep well back from them when they are overtaking a high-sided vehicle.

Motorists are also advised to drive with care due to possible wind-blown debris.

Travel advice

If you're planning to travel by air or sea, you should check with the ferry company or airline in case there are any delays or cancellations.

Strong winds advice

You should:

- keep your property in a well-maintained condition (for example replace/repair any loose roof tiles, guttering, and so on that could potentially come loose and cause injury or damage to property)
- secure loose objects such as ladders, garden furniture, wheelie bins, trampolines, or anything else that could be blown around
- close and securely fasten doors and windows
- park vehicles in a garage (if you have one) or keep them clear of buildings, trees, walls, and fences
- make sure you are prepared should there be a power cut

During a storm you should:

- stay indoors as much as possible
- if you do go out, try not to walk or shelter close to buildings and trees
- not go outside to repair damage while the storm is ongoing
- not drive unless your journey is really necessary
- if you're a farmer, not enter fields bordered by trees or with powerlines unless absolutely necessary

After a storm you should:

- be careful not to touch any electrical/ telephone cables that have been blown down or are still hanging
- not walk too close to walls, buildings, and trees as they could have been weakened

Preparing for a power cut

It's important to be prepared for a potential loss of power. You should:

- know where your household fuses and trip switches are so that you can check if the problem is with your electrics only
- test smoke alarms regularly
- keep a supply of new batteries in torches and radios (for checking updates on news bulletins)
- keep a supply of candles
- keep mobile phones, laptops or tablets fully charged – so you will have use of battery power for a short time at least

- have the telephone numbers you might need to hand (as well as mobile phones, a non-mains powered landline telephone will help you stay in touch during any disruptions to your power supply)
- if you have a baby at home, make sure you have a supply of pre-prepared formula baby milk (if used) and prepare a flask of hot water to heat bottles and baby food (it is always safer to make up a fresh feed; when this is not possible, feeds should never be stored for longer than 24 hours)

If you depend on electrical equipment that is vital to your health, contact Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) Networks to get on their Critical Care Register:

If your electricity goes off

If your electricity goes off, you should:

- check your fuses and trip switches – then check if your neighbours are without power
- leave one light on
- leave your fridge/ freezer switched on with the door shut to maintain a low temperature
- check that other electrical appliances and machinery are switched off at the wall
- preferably use a torch, oil or gas lamp as a source of light rather than candles
- if you must use naked flames, please take extra care and make certain that they are put out before you go to bed
- check on elderly or vulnerable neighbours in your area to make sure they are okay
- if you are using a generator, be careful where you site it in case of carbon monoxide poisoning

Water supply

In the event of difficulties with the water and sewerage, you will get the most up-to-date information on areas experiencing disruption on the [NI Water website](#). This includes a full postcode search facility.

You can also phone Waterline 24 hours a day/ 365 days a year on:

More useful links

[**Strong winds warning – power and**](#)

travel advice

With very strong winds forecast, it's important that people take care to protect themselves and their property. Disruption to traffic or travel is likely and power cuts are also a possibility. People should monitor the Met Office forecasts for their area, be aware of the weather conditions, and pay attention to safety warnings.

Emergency numbers

People should note the following numbers in case of emergency:

- Emergency services – 999 or 112
- Housing Executive – 03448 920 901
- Northern Ireland Electricity Networks – 03457 643 643
- NI Gas Emergency Service – 0800 002 001
- Northern Ireland Water Waterline – 03457 440 088
- Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100

Roads information

If there are any problems on the roads, you can get the latest updates on the [this link](#):

Schools and Further Education colleges closures

All schools and Further Education colleges have been advised to close today (Monday 16 October) as a precautionary measure.

Forest and country park closures

Forests and country parks are closed to public access today (Monday 16 October) due to the severity of risk from falling trees and branches from the expected very strong winds.

You are advised to stay away from forests until the expected storm has passed and any damage is assessed. Please note that the risk is likely to last for some days.

Strong winds advice

You should:

- keep your property in a well-maintained condition (for example replace/repair any loose roof tiles, guttering, and so on that could potentially come loose and cause injury or damage to property)
- secure loose objects such as ladders, garden furniture, wheelie bins, trampolines, or anything else that could be blown around
- close and securely fasten doors and windows

- park vehicles in a garage (if you have one) or keep them clear of buildings, trees, walls, and fences
- make sure you are prepared should there be a power cut

During a storm you should:

- stay indoors as much as possible
- if you do go out, try not to walk or shelter close to buildings and trees
- not go outside to repair damage while the storm is ongoing
- not drive unless your journey is really necessary

After a storm you should:

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- keep mobile phones, laptops or tablets fully charged – so you will have use of battery power for a short time at least
- have the telephone numbers you might need to hand (as well as mobile phones, a non-mains powered landline telephone will help you stay in touch during any disruptions to your power supply)
- if you have a baby at home, make sure you have a supply of pre-prepared formula baby milk (if used) and prepare a flask of hot water to heat bottles and baby food (it is always safer to make up a fresh feed; when this is not possible, feeds should never be stored for longer than 24 hours)

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- check on elderly or vulnerable neighbours in your area to make sure they are okay
- if you are using a generator, be careful where you site it in case of carbon monoxide poisoning

Reporting a power cut

If your power is off and you want to report it or get more information, contact NIE Networks Customer Helpline or visit their website:

Traffic and travel

High-sided vehicles are most affected by windy weather, but strong gusts can also blow a car, cyclist, motorcyclist or horse rider off course. This can happen on open stretches of road exposed to strong cross winds, or when passing bridges or gaps in the hedges.

In very windy weather a vehicle may be affected by turbulence created by large vehicles. Motorcyclists are particularly affected, so keep well back from them when they are overtaking a high-sided vehicle.

Motorists are also advised to drive with care due to possible wind-blown debris.

Pedestrians and road users in coastal areas should also beware of dangerous conditions caused by strong winds, particularly around times of high tide.

If there are any problems on the roads as a result of strong winds, you can get the latest updates on the [TrafficwatchNI website](#).

If you're planning to travel by air or sea, you should check with the ferry company or airline in case there are any delays or cancellations.

More useful links

Share this page

Improving reading skills and discovering joy of books

Books allow us to experience the pleasure of reading, opening up a world of fun, enjoyment and learning for children, young people and adults.

Libraries

Public libraries are obviously a great source of books. If you're not currently a member of a library, think about joining.

They have a large selection of books for all ages, including eBooks, large print books, and audio books on CD.

But as well as books, libraries also offer a wide range of free services, including:

- loaning of magazines and eMagazines
- local history resources
- computer use
- internet access and Wi-Fi

You can find out more information on the [libraries page](#).

Reading to your child

Parents are advised to do what they can to encourage their children to develop their reading skills. Taking the time to read to a child can help them to discover the joy of reading.

Whether it's reading a story to little ones at bedtime or enjoying a novel together with an older child, parents and families can help boost children's reading ability and, in turn, their learning potential.

Parents can also encourage children to put the computer games aside for a while, pick up a book instead and get their child to read out loud to them.

You can get useful tips and advice in the following section:

Parental involvement and encouragement, no matter how small, can have a direct and long-lasting effect on a child's educational achievements.

More useful links