

Prepare for winter driving conditions

Road users are urged to take extra care during the darker months and be prepared for the challenges of winter driving. From now until April around 300 staff, 130 gritters, and 12 snow blowers will be on standby to keep traffic moving on main roads during wintry conditions.

Take extra care on roads

Darker mornings, evenings and lower temperatures around this time of year make conditions more difficult.

Road surface temperatures are usually a few degrees lower, so drivers should not rely on in-car temperature sensors as an indicator of possible frost or ice.

Drivers should:

- slow down
- stay focused and alert
- never ever drink or take drugs and drive
- always wear a seatbelt

In particular, watch out for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders, as they will be much more difficult to see in the dark mornings and evenings.

Remember, you should heed the advice in the Highway Code and drive, ride or cycle with extra care, even if roads have been salted.

You should also be prepared for road conditions changing over short distances, and take care when overtaking gritters.

You should note that:

- a journey could start or end on an untreated section of road
- salt does not act immediately, it needs vehicles to turn it into an effective solution
- roads can refreeze after spreading, particularly in showery conditions

There is more information on the page below:

We all have a personal responsibility to keep ourselves and other road users safe.

Salting roads

The main roads which carry more than 1,500 vehicles a day are salted. In exceptional circumstances, some roads carrying between 1,000 and 1,500

vehicles daily will also be salted.

Arrangements are also in place to get the help of contractors, including farmers, to clear blocked roads following heavy snow.

The following page has more information:

Extra salt bins are provided on routes not included as part of the gritting network. These are free-of-charge for people to use themselves.

Up-to-date road conditions information

You can get up-to-date information about road conditions during the winter on the [TrafficwatchNI](#) website.

More useful links

[People urged to get flu vaccine](#)

People are urged to get the free flu vaccine if offered it, even if they feel fit and healthy. The vaccine offers protection against a number of viruses which are expected to circulate this winter.

Important to get vaccinated

The vaccine changes each year to cover the strains which are likely to be around over the course of the flu season, so it's important to get immunised every year.

This year two new and more effective vaccines are being introduced to improve the protection offered to those at risk:

- a vaccine for people aged 65 and over), which has been specifically designed to increase immunity in this age group
- a vaccine for people aged under 65 who have underlying health conditions and pregnant women

The vaccine does not give people the flu.

You can find out more at the page below:

Getting the vaccine

Everyone who is eligible for the vaccine should make themselves aware of their own GP surgery's flu vaccination arrangements. They will be able to get

the vaccine by the end of November.

If you have any queries, you should contact your GP directly.

As it takes approximately two weeks following vaccination to develop maximum protection against flu, it is important to get vaccinated early.

If you wait until flu starts circulating, it may be too late for the vaccine to protect you.

Everyone should aim to have the vaccine by early December.

Pregnant women

Pregnant women are more likely to have serious illness if they catch flu.

They will be invited at all stages of pregnancy to get the vaccine by their GP, to help protect them and their unborn baby.

Children

Primary school children will get the vaccination at school, while pre-school children will receive it through their local GP surgery.

Most children get the vaccine through a quick and painless nasal spray.

You can find out more on the [flu vaccine for children page](#).

Flu symptoms

Flu can be a very unpleasant illness, and in some cases, very dangerous.

The flu virus spreads easily and quickly through the air when people cough and sneeze without covering their nose and mouth.

The same [flu symptoms](#) are experienced by both adults and children:

- fever
- chills
- aching muscles and joints
- headache
- extreme tiredness

These symptoms can last between two and eight days and, for some, can lead to serious illness and result in a stay in hospital.

More useful links

Advice for parents of a child with a severe allergy

If you're the parent or carer of a child with a severe allergy, there is expert advice available on the supply of EpiPens and other adrenaline auto-injectors.

EpiPen Junior

You might already know about a problem with the supply of EpiPen Junior, which is expected to last several months.

If you have your normal supplies of EpiPen Junior, continue just as you normally would. That means:

- try and avoid the things your child is allergic to as much as possible
- if your child has a severe allergic or anaphylactic reaction:
 - [give them their adrenaline pen](#) straight away
 - call 999 (say 'anaphylaxis' even if your child starts to feel better)
 - say you think your child has had a severe allergic reaction and that you have given them an adrenaline pen
- check the expiry dates of all your EpiPen Juniors – the expiry date of a pen is the final day of the month listed on the device (for example the final date of a November pen is 30 November)
- don't ask for a repeat prescription until the expiry date is nearly reached – stocks of pens will be kept for those who need them most

Other adrenaline auto-injectors

If you need a replacement EpiPen Junior and haven't been able to get one, you might instead be given a device called Jext or Emerade. These might say epinephrine on them but it is exactly the same drug.

These pens are used in a different way, so you will need to read the instructions and/ or watch a training video to learn how to use it.

Your GP or practice nurse can give you advice on your new pen.

If you have been given a pen that is in-date, but not your usual brand, it's better to use this than using an out-of-date pen that is your usual brand.

If all your auto-injectors are out-of-date

If your child has a severe allergic or anaphylactic reaction and all the adrenaline pens you have are out-of-date you should:

- give the out-of-date pen

- call 999 saying 'anaphylaxis' even if your child starts to feel better
- say you think your child has had a severe allergic reaction and that you have given them an adrenaline pen

An out-of-date pen might give your child a lower dose of adrenaline but it's not dangerous and is better than waiting for an ambulance to arrive.

When new stock does arrive, people who have out-of-date pens will be prioritised.

If your child weighs more than 25kg

If your child weighs more than 25kg (four stone), your GP should prescribe a 300mcg adrenaline pen when the pens you have expire.

The pen might say it's for children who weigh more than 30kg but experts have said that during this period of reduced supply it can be used for children who weigh more than 25kg.

More useful links

[Information and advice if looking for work](#)

If you're looking for a job, there is a wide range of advice on nidirect. From training programmes to careers guidance, including tips on writing your CV, you'll find useful practical information to help.

Develop your skills

Whether you're a school leaver or someone looking to return to work, developing your skills can help you to gain confidence and the skills you need to get the job you want.

From further education colleges and universities, to improving your essential skills like maths and computing, there are lots of courses and programmes available. Visit the following page to find out more:

Careers advice

If you've just left school or university, or maybe you've decided to change jobs, getting some careers advice can help you take that next step into employment.

Visit your local Jobs and Benefits office

Advisors at your local Jobs and Benefits office can give you lots of help and support if you are looking for work. They can:

- help you to develop the skills and competence to become employable, if you are not 'job-ready'
- match you to suitable job opportunities
- administer Universal Credit, Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support and Incapacity Benefit in Jobs and Benefits Offices

You can find your local job centre at this link:

Applying for jobs

Job hunting can be nerve-racking, but there are things you can do to get prepared:

- get your CV sorted and keep it up to date
- speak to the Careers Service or your local job centre
- read our advice on job application forms and interviews

You can find links below:

You'll find more information on finding and applying for jobs on the following pages:

More useful links

[Be aware of breast cancer signs and get checked early](#)

All women are urged to be 'breast aware' and to recognise that lumps aren't the only sign of breast cancer to look out for. It's vital to get checked early and go for screening when invited.

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.

Any changes which are not normal for you should be investigated straight away by your GP. Don't be embarrassed or ignore any potential signs.

You can find out more on the [breast cancer in women 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.

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.

More useful links