

Clean your hands on family days out

It's important to clean your hands thoroughly and regularly on days out with the family to the likes of farms or swimming pools. Good hand hygiene can help prevent the spread of infections. By following a few simple tips, you can have an enjoyable time and stay well.

Open farms and swimming pools

Open farms and swimming pools can be great days out for all the family. But it's important to practise good personal hygiene at the appropriate times when visiting these places.

All animals naturally carry a range of organisms, some of which can be spread to children and adults and can potentially cause severe infection, particularly in young children.

For example, E. coli 0157 is easily passed from animals to children, can spread easily within the household and may cause severe infection in young children.

Cryptosporidium is another organism which causes infection. Symptoms include vomiting, abdominal cramps and watery diarrhoea. It can happen through contaminated recreational waters, including swimming pools.

Simple steps to follow

To reduce the risk of illness, all adults and children should follow some simple steps to ensure a fun day out.

Advice for swimmers:

- don't swim when you have diarrhoea or have had diarrhoea within the past 48 hours
- don't swim for 14 days after being diagnosed with Cryptosporidiosis
- take a shower before swimming
- wash your hands after using the toilet or changing nappies
- make sure that babies and children wear purpose-made swimming nappies and take your child on bathroom breaks
- do not swallow water

Advice for visits to the farm:

- wash hands thoroughly using soap and water after handling animals or touching surfaces at the farm
- hands should always be washed before eating or drinking and after using the toilet

You can find out more on the following page:

Antibacterial hand gels and wipes are not a substitute for washing hands, as gels and wipes may not remove germs and bugs in the way that running water can.

However, using such gels after hand washing with soap and water may reduce the risk of picking up these infections.

Always supervise children's personal hygiene to make sure it is carried out properly.

More useful links

[Recognising symptoms of scarlet fever](#)

It's not uncommon to see a rise in cases of scarlet fever at this time of year. Parents are encouraged to look out for symptoms and go to the GP immediately if they have concerns.

Symptoms

[Scarlet fever](#) is a common childhood infection caused by bacteria which can be found on the skin, throat and other places.

It was once a very common and dangerous disease, but antibiotic treatment means it is now much less serious.

The symptoms of scarlet fever in early illness may include:

- sore throat
- headache
- fever
- nausea and vomiting

After 12 to 48 hours a red, generalised pinhead rash develops, typically first appearing on the chest and stomach, rapidly spreading to other parts of the body, giving the skin a sandpaper-like texture.

On more darkly-pigmented skin, the scarlet rash may be harder to spot, although the 'sandpaper' feel should be present.

You can find out more about the disease on the page below:

Children or adults diagnosed with scarlet fever are advised to stay at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others.

More useful links

[Ask police if concerned a partner has history of abusive behaviour](#)

Date published: 26 March 2018

If you have concerns that your partner, or the partner of someone you know, has a history of abusive behaviour you can now ask the police confidentially about them. This will enable you or someone you know to make an informed choice about an existing personal relationship.

Look for signs and contact police

This new [Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure scheme](#) can help protect people from becoming a victim of domestic violence or abuse.

It is similar to a scheme introduced in England and Wales, which is commonly referred to as 'Clare's Law', and to a scheme introduced in Scotland.

It provides safe and confidential support and guidance.

You can find out more, including how to ask about a partner's history, on the following page:

Look for the signs of [domestic violence and abuse](#), and apply to the scheme if you're worried about the abusive history of your or someone else's partner.

Anyone suffering from domestic abuse is encouraged to contact their local police on the non-emergency 101 or in an emergency always call 999.

More useful links

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[Heavy rain warning – advice and information](#)

Heavy rain forecast for some areas, with travel delays and difficult driving conditions possible in some areas. You can find advice about preparing for any potential localised flooding. It might be useful to take note of the Flooding Incident Line number – 0300 2000 100.

Weather warning

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

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
- Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100
- Northern Ireland Electricity Networks – 03457 643 643
- NI Gas Emergency Service – 0800 002 001
- Northern Ireland Water Waterline – 03457 440 088
- Housing Executive – 03448 920 901
- [Report a fallen tree or blocked road](#) – 0300 200 7891

There is also information about emergencies at this link:

Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100

The Flooding Incident Line is available 24 hours a day, every day. You can report flooding problems on roads or burst water mains and blocked drains.

When you ring the flooding incident line, a member of staff will:

- take all your details
- contact the appropriate agency on your behalf

This is a non emergency number, so if you are in danger, call the emergency services on 999.

You can get more information about flooding at the following link:

Roads information

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

Public transport

You can find the latest information about bus and rail services on the [Translink website](#).

Preparing for a flood

To help reduce the impact of flooding on your home, you should:

- have some sandbags or floodboards or plastic covers prepared to block doorways and airbricks
- know where to turn off your electricity and/ or gas
- move your valuable possessions to safety
- ensure your insurance provides cover against flood damage to property
- keep a list of useful contact numbers such as your local council, emergency services and your insurance company

You can get more details on the [preparing for a flood](#) page.

Driving and walking in flooded areas

You should always plan your journey and check the latest weather and travel advice.

Do not travel in heavy rainstorms unless absolutely necessary.

In flooded areas, drivers should not:

- enter flood water that is moving or is more than four inches deep
- under any circumstances, drive through fast-flowing water as the car could be swept away

In more shallow but passable water:

- slow down
- avoid creating bow waves which can damage your car engine; and
- remember to test the brakes after leaving the water

Do not attempt to walk through flooded areas. Even shallow water moving fast can sweep you off your feet and there may be hidden dangers such as:

- open drains
- damaged road surfaces
- submerged debris; or
- deep channels which can result in serious injury or, in the worst cases, death

If you do become stranded in flood water and you feel there is a risk to life, dial 999 for emergency assistance.

Insurance claims after a flood

If you are going to report flood damage to your insurance company there are certain things to remember. You should keep a record of the flood damage and any contact you have with the insurance company.

If you have different insurers for the structure of your home and your content, make sure you contact them both.

If you live in rented accommodation, the landlord will deal with the structure of your home. For content claims, contact your own insurer.

You can find out more at this page:

Risks related to flooding

Be aware of hidden dangers under the water, such as missing manhole covers, and guard against the possibility of falling into fast-flowing water.

The risk of becoming ill after contact with flood water is generally low. However, as it is not always clear whether flood water is contaminated, you should assume that it is and take appropriate precautions.

Preventing health problems

There are a number of things you can do to prevent health problems if your home floods:

- wherever possible try to avoid coming into direct contact with floodwater
- do not let children play in floodwater
- use rubber gloves when cleaning up
- wash hands after being in contact with flood water, sewage or anything contaminated by these
- wash children's hands regularly
- clean toys that have been in flood water with disinfectant
- cover cuts or open sores
- don't eat any food that has been in contact with floodwater
- clean all surfaces with disinfectant before any food is placed on them

Contact your GP if you, or someone you know, develops a stomach upset following flooding.

More useful links

Removal and clamping of vehicles parked illegally

Drivers who park illegally in urban clearways or bus lanes on main roads into and out of Belfast may have their vehicles removed and clamped. As well as being issued with a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN), additional charges to have the vehicle released will have to be paid.

Vehicle pound

A two-week, 'one strike' warning period is in place until Monday 19 March. During this time drivers parking illegally in these urban clearways and bus lanes will be issued with a warning notice in relation to removal and clamping.

Vehicles parked illegally may either be:

- removed to a legal parking location nearby to where they were originally illegally parked, and then clamped
- removed to the vehicle pound located at 1N McKinney Road, Mallusk, Newtownabbey

All vehicles removed will receive a £90 [Penalty Charge Notice](#), discounted to £45 if paid within 14 days.

An additional £40 will be payable for the release of any vehicle which has been relocated nearby, with a charge of £105 if it has been removed to the vehicle pound.

Unclaimed vehicles remaining at the vehicle pound will be charged an additional £12 per day storage rate.

You can find out more information at this link:

Drivers are urged to give consideration to other road users and park legally at all times. This helps traffic to flow more freely, including public transport, and reduces traffic congestion and the associated environmental pollution.

More useful links

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