

## TOP TIPS FOR WINTER

Winter is coming! This is a period when respiratory problems are more common. On this sheet are some top tips to help you stay healthy and manage any problems more quickly.

### Winter and Respiratory problems:

Winter is the time of year that cold and influenza viruses abound. Unfortunately, these viruses can be hard to avoid as they can survive on surfaces for many hours. Having a viral chest infection can make any chronic lung condition worse. These can cause flare ups of both asthma and the condition, COPD.



**Tip 1. KEEP WARM** and drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated as warm dry air can make your secretions more difficult to clear. Ideal indoor temperature should be above 18°C. If you are having problems with heating bills, you may be eligible for help. For further information in North London call 0300 555 0195 in South London call 0808 169 1779.



**Tip 2. KEEP ACTIVE** or as active as possible but wear warm clothes if going out and check the weather beforehand.



**Tip 3. FLU VACCINE** Most patients with a chronic respiratory problem will benefit from a yearly influenza vaccination which may help protect you against flu viruses – please check with your GP if you have not had one.



**Tip 4. PNEUMONIA VACCINE** Patients over the age of 65 or those with chronic long-term conditions should also have a pneumonia vaccine (which only protects against one common type of pneumonia). One injection should protect you for life. Please check with your GP if you do not recall having one.



**Tip 5. TAKE YOUR RESPIRATORY MEDICINES REGULARLY** During the warmer weather, your chest condition may have felt better, and you may have been tempted to reduce your medications. You should ensure that you are now taking the correct medications at the correct dose, and that you do not run out. If you are not sure how much or what to take, please check with your GP.



**Tip 6. QUIT SMOKING** Smoking can make your lungs more susceptible to infection by viruses and bacteria. Don't wait for the New Year to stop, now is a better time to minimise the chance of problems over the winter. Millions of people have used support to help them to stop smoking and you're four times more likely to quit with NHS help. Your local stop smoking service can be contacted on: .....



**Tip 7. EMERGENCY PACK** If you have chronic asthma or COPD and are susceptible to flare ups, you should have an emergency pack of antibiotics and steroid tablets at home to take if your condition becomes worse. You can take the antibiotics if your sputum changes (i.e. becomes thicker, darker, smellier or there is more of it), and the steroids if you become a lot more breathless than usual and your rescue (usually blue) inhaler is not as effective. Hopefully, you may not need to take these but if you are not sure, contact .....