

Dear Patient

With the change to colder weather over recent weeks, we have some tips on how to be prepared and look after your health this winter. We also share detail on winter vaccines; who is eligible and how to book.

This issue includes information about a new virtual drugs and alcohol service, which has launched in the Highlands.

We've also taken the opportunity to remind those eligible to respond to their bowel screening invitation. It's a simple process!

Please stay safe this winter and continue to be active and get outdoors where possible! Remember, being active can boost physical and mental health.

Team Cairn

Be prepared this Winter

Practice self-care: Keep your medicine cupboard well-stocked with essentials and know how to manage minor illnesses at home.



For minor health concerns, your **local pharmacy** should be your first point of call. Pharmacists are trained professionals who can offer advice and treatment without the need for an appointment. Using your local pharmacy can help you get care quickly. They may also be able to offer treatment and prescription medication for some conditions without you needing to see a GP, a service known as [Pharmacy First](#).

Look after your mental health and boost your immunity: Winter can be challenging for mental wellbeing, so take steps to stay connected, [active](#), and mindful. A balanced diet and regular physical activity are crucial for maintaining a strong immune system. Even in colder weather, try to incorporate [fruits, vegetables](#), and exercise into your daily routine. Drinking enough water is also essential, even in winter. It helps your body function optimally and prevents dehydration, which can weaken your immune system.

Prevent falls: Take precautions to prevent falls, especially if you're older or caring for someone who is older. For more information, resources, and guidance on winter fall prevention, visit [NHS Inform](#).

Highland Alcohol and Drug Support

WithYou Highland provides free and confidential services, without judgement, to people facing challenges with drugs and alcohol. If you have questions, need advice for yourself or someone else, or just want to talk, we're WithYou.



How we can support you

Our expert recovery workers are available by phone, videocall and webchat - making it easy for people in Highland to access support.

- Services are completely free
- Support is provided without judgement
- Your privacy is important to us

Support for a loved one

It can be stressful and overwhelming when someone you love is facing challenges relating to alcohol or drugs. You may feel unsure how best to help them or how to cope yourself.

We can offer a listening ear, practical advice, and emotional support, so you don't have to manage these feelings alone.

We'll help you understand what's happening, explore ways to protect your own wellbeing, and stay connected to your loved one in a way that's safe and sustainable for you both.

How to access

Please get in touch. We expect to respond to you within 24 hours.

Email: highlandanywhere@wearewithyou.org.uk
Phone: 0808 168 0860

For more information visit the **WithYou** [website](#).

Winter Vaccines



The flu and coronavirus vaccines are being offered from September 2025. If you're eligible, you will receive a letter, email or text message with details of your appointment or information on how you can book one.

Remember; the practice is no longer responsible for the delivery of vaccinations. Patients can direct questions about child or adult immunisations to the NHS Highland Service Delivery Centre (SDC) helpline: phone 08000 320 339, Mon-Fri, 9:30am-5:00pm.

Who can get the vaccines?

You'll be offered the flu and coronavirus vaccines this year if you:

- are aged 75 years or over
- live in a care home for older adults
- are aged 6 months or over and [have a weakened immune system](#)

Some people may only be eligible for the [flu vaccine](#).

Why should I get the flu vaccine?

Flu can be serious for some people. This year's vaccine gives you the best possible protection against the flu viruses likely to be circulating this season.

The vaccine helps protect you from getting the flu. If you do get flu and have been vaccinated, the symptoms are likely to be milder and not last as long. This will reduce your risk of needing to go to hospital with serious flu illness.

It also helps to reduce the spread of flu and may protect those around you from getting ill.

Eligibility for winter vaccines is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). This guidance is reviewed every year so it's important to check what vaccines you are eligible for this year.

Booking an appointment

Click [here](#) to find out how to book your vaccine appointment. Appointments in Inverness are usually available at the NHS Vaccination Clinic based in the Eastgate Shopping Centre.

Did you respond to your Bowel Screening Invite?

Bowel cancer is one of the most common cancers in Scotland. Around 4,000 people in Scotland get bowel cancer every year.

You will be invited to complete the bowel screening test if you:

- are 50 to 74 years old
- are living in Scotland
- haven't been screened in the last 2 years



Your screening invitation

Bowel screening involves taking a simple test at home every 2 years. The test looks for hidden blood in your poo, as this could mean a higher chance of bowel cancer.

If you're aged 50 to 74 years old, the Scottish Bowel Screening Centre will send a free test kit to your home address. This is the address you used to register with your GP.

If you're 75 or over you'll no longer be invited to take a bowel screening test. But, you can still take a bowel screening test every 2 years. You'll need to request a new test kit each time as the Scottish Bowel Screening Centre won't send you one.

Festive Closure Days

During the festive period, the practice will be closed as follows:

- Thursday, 25th December 2025
- Friday, 26th December 2025
- Thursday 1st January 2026
- Friday 2nd January 2026

Please plan ahead and ensure you have ordered and collected prescriptions ahead of time.

- For urgent medical concerns, please contact NHS24.
- **In a medical emergency, please dial 999.**