



# Support materials for running a local cold and flu campaign

## Why run a cold and flu campaign?

Colds and flu affect 15 million people each year in the UK.<sup>1</sup> Both infections are much more common in the winter months and it has been suggested that there may be a higher incidence of flu than usual this winter after two years of relatively limited outbreaks.<sup>2</sup>

Colds and flu can often lead people to make unnecessary trips to their GP when they should be resting at home.<sup>3</sup> They may mistakenly think that they need antibiotics to get better,<sup>4</sup> or simply seek medical advice too soon because they do not know how long the symptoms typically last.<sup>5</sup>

The months leading up to the cold and flu season are therefore an ideal time for informing people about how to prepare for such illnesses, what they can do if they get ill and when they do need to see the doctor.

### Key Messages:

- Most people suffering from colds and flu can treat their symptoms at home without going to the doctor
- Antibiotics do not help get rid of colds and flu
- Providing information about colds and flu can help people effectively manage their symptoms through self care and know when it is necessary to go to the doctor.

If you are planning on running a cold and flu campaign in your local area, here are some resources that you might find useful:

### For the doctor's surgery

#### **European Antibiotic Awareness Day posters 18<sup>th</sup> November 2011:**

The European Antibiotic Awareness Day on 18 November 2011 provides a platform to remind prescribers and the general public about the dangers of antibiotic overuse. The key message is to encourage prudent antibiotic prescribing so that antibiotics remain a safe and effective resource for the future. The posters promote the message in relation to colds and flu.

- [No amount of antibiotics will get rid of your cold](#)  
[Antibiotics won't help your defences against a cold](#)

These posters can be put up in the waiting room to remind people that antibiotics don't work in the treatment of colds

- **The battle against flu and colds leaflet** (<http://www.selfcareforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Coldandfluleafletcolour.pdf>)  
(<http://www.selfcareforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/fluleafletblackandwhiteversion.pdf>)

This leaflet, produced by PAGB and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), explains how long people can expect the symptoms of colds and flu to last and what can be done to relieve them.

- **Non-prescription pad**

A 'Non-prescription' that can be given to patients suffering from colds and flu who do not need a prescription for antibiotics.

### **For the local media**

Local newspapers, radio and regional television news can be a great way of getting messages out to a large number of patients at little cost. Such media is always keen to find suitable stories that have a local angle and can be used to fill column inches and air time.

The following **press release** can be downloaded and adapted to be sent out to local media.

A list of local newspapers and their contact details can be found on the Newspaper Society's website - [NS website](#) and most local radio stations will have their own website with contact details on.

Offering a spokesperson for interview such as a GP, practice nurse or pharmacist can be a very effective way of gaining media coverage, particularly radio coverage e.g. a phone-in about colds and flu.

Both the [Royal Pharmaceutical Society](#) and the [National Pharmacy Association](#) have a network of community pharmacists across the UK who are media trained and available as spokespeople. Speak to your local medical committee about their media spokespeople.

### **Flu vaccination**

The seasonal flu vaccine is offered free to people at greater risk of developing serious complications if they catch flu.

It is recommended that people have the flu jab if they:

- are 65 years old or over
- are pregnant
- have a serious medical condition

- are living in a long-stay residential care home or other long-stay care facility (not including prisons, young offender institutions or university halls of residence)
- are the main carer for an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if you fall ill
- are a frontline health or social care worker

Further information can be found on the [NHS Choices website](#)

### **Key Facts and Figures**

- Colds and flu affect 15 million people each year in the UK.<sup>6</sup>
- Colds are caused by over 200 viruses, compared to seasonal flu which is caused by three types of virus; influenza A, B, and C.
- Colds and flu have similar symptoms and it can be difficult to tell whether you have a heavy cold or flu. The main differences are that flu symptoms are more severe, with a high temperature and symptoms that come on quickly.
- It has been estimated that adults suffer 2 to 5 colds per year, and school children may suffer 7 to 10 colds per year.<sup>7</sup>
- The cold and flu season lasts from around September to March. 80% of all annual colds are contracted during this time period.<sup>8</sup>
- One theory for why there is an increase in colds and flu in winter is because of more people gathering indoors in poorly ventilated rooms makes it easier for the virus to spread.
- Women get more colds than men, probably due to increased interaction with children.<sup>9</sup>
- Once outside the nasal passages, the cold virus can survive up to three hours on inanimate objects and skin.
- The saying 'Feed a cold and starve a fever' is a myth – while appetite is often lost during a fever, you should actually try to eat something nutritious to help give you energy to fight the virus.

The NHS Choices website also has a whole section on colds and flu at: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Coldsandflu/Pages/Coldsandfluhome.aspx>

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- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/CheckSymptoms/SATs/coldandflu.aspx>
  - <sup>2</sup> Daily Express, 26 Sept 11: <http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/273707/Killer-flu-to-grip-Britain>
  - <sup>3</sup> <https://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/CheckSymptoms/SATs/coldandflu.aspx>
  - <sup>4</sup> [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Antibioticresistance/DH\\_120871](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Antibioticresistance/DH_120871)
  - <sup>5</sup> Self Care Journal; 2010; 1:1-13, Self care of minor ailments: a survey of consumer and healthcare professional beliefs and behaviour; I. Banks. The Men's Health Forum, London UK
  - <sup>6</sup> <https://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/CheckSymptoms/SATs/coldandflu.aspx>
  - <sup>7</sup> Johnston S, Holgate S. Epidemiology of viral respiratory infections. In: Myint S, Taylor-Robinson D, eds. Viral and other infections of the human respiratory tract. London: Chapman & Hall, 1996:1-38.
  - <sup>8</sup> The Battle against cold and flu CHIC leaflet
  - <sup>9</sup> <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/coldsandflu/Pages/Fivefactsaboutcolds.aspx>