

**For immediate release**

Tuesday January 31, 2012

**Advice on how to cope with the big freeze**

With temperatures forecast to dip below freezing older people, those with ill health and young families are being urged to make sure they know how best to keep themselves warm and well during the cold weather.

Those who are more vulnerable during cold spells can find themselves at risk from major health problems during the winter months. They can experience a drop in body temperature which can often aggravate circulatory diseases and lead to strokes and heart attacks or respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis or pneumonia.

Rod Moore, deputy director of public health speaking on behalf of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland PCT Cluster, said: "When the temperature outside drops it is important to have regular hot drinks and meals to keep your energy levels up. Try to get your five a day of fruit and vegetables and keep your diet varied.

"If you keep active this will help you to feel warmer, but if you are going outside it is very important to wrap up well and wear boots or shoes with a good grip. If it is icy or snowy outside, be aware that paths, steps and driveways can become a hazard, making the ground slippery and increasing the risk of slips, trips and falls. If you are able to ask a family member, friend or neighbour to shop for you when weather conditions are bad.

"It is also a good idea to take advantage of the free seasonal flu jab if you are in one of the at risk groups, such as over 65s or those suffering from a long-term health condition."

How to keep warm and well:

- Listen to the weather forecast and know when the temperature is most likely to drop
- Keep your home heated between 18-21 °C and avoid draughts by keeping curtains and doors closed
- Find out as soon as possible if you are entitled to financial help with heating bills or insulation
- Wear several thin layers of warm clothes rather than one thick layer, as this helps to maintain body heat
- Eat at least one hot meal a day and have regular hot drinks to keep energy levels up
- Keep active – take a walk around your house rather than sitting still all day

- Have the flu jab
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing and then throw it away. Regularly wash your hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer gel when out and about. Encourage others to do the same.

ENDS

**For interviews or more information please contact senior media officer  
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Notes to editor:

In October 2010 NHS Leicester City and NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland joined forces to form a 'cluster', in line with the requirements of the Department of Health. Although we share one Cluster Board and our staff work across the city and county boundaries, we have not legally merged, and retain our separate statutory duties. Together we serve a population of more than a million people. Cluster formation is an interim stage in the reform of the NHS, involving ongoing transfer of most local commissioning functions to GP-led clinical commissioning groups, in line with the Health and Social Care Bill, now before Parliament and the House of Lords.