

Winter pressures FAQs

During the winter people are more likely to get ill, and there is a direct link between cold weather and severe illness in older or other at risk groups of people.

Exceptionally long or extremely cold weather does mean an increase in admissions for the following conditions:

Circulation problems

Cold weather makes circulation more difficult, increasing the risk of strokes and heart attacks. People with diabetes are also more at risk from circulation problems in cold weather. Keeping warm, both indoors and out, and doing some gentle exercise can reduce the risk.

Falls

Icy and wet surfaces are a hazard, but when you are cold your muscle react more slowly making you more likely to fall. Wear warm, dry, flat, non-slip shoes or boots, especially in frosty weather.

Breathing problems

Persistent exposure to cold reduces resistance to chest infections, especially for people who have bronchitis, asthma, emphysema or another lung disorder. Keep warm, do not go out more than you need to and wear a hat.

If you smoke, try to stop now. For confidential advice and support with giving up smoking, call the **NHS Smoking Helpline: Freephone 0800 169 0 169**.

Flu

(see separate FAQ sheet)

Winter vomiting disease (norovirus)

This and many other sickness and diarrhoea bugs are common in winter. They spread very quickly particularly where people are close together (schools, offices, nursing homes and hospitals). The best way of preventing the spread of this type of illness, as with many others is **thorough handwashing**. Professionals are trained to do this properly, and visitors are also asked to wash their hands before and after visiting.

How does Mayday cope?

In common with all NHS Trusts, Mayday plans for seasonal changes in demand and ensures it has enough capacity in the winter months to cope with the expected increase in emergency admissions. This means that more elective (planned) operations are carried out in the spring and autumn months, to make sure that all patients do not have to wait longer than necessary for their treatment.

When demand is exceptionally high, the Trust does have the flexibility to open and staff additional beds (at additional cost) and will in extreme circumstances postpone non-urgent operations, and these measures are taken for as short a time as possible to handle the peak demand.