

Help keep the early years community healthy this winter – simple steps that make a big difference

As we head into the colder months where illnesses and viruses like colds and flu, COVID-19, norovirus and Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) can spread easily, we understand the impact they can have on young children, learning and daily life in your setting. That's why we're reaching out with some simple everyday steps that can make a real difference in keeping your children, families and staff healthy through winter.

Five Key Messages to share:

- **Regular handwashing:** 4 in 5 illnesses like colds and flu can be spread by hands. Just washing hands regularly for 15-20 seconds with soap and water is one of the best ways to protect against illnesses like colds and flu. For our youngest children, this is also a wonderful opportunity to develop independence and self-care skills.
- **Staying home if unwell:** Encouraging this simple step gives children and staff time to rest and recover and helps prevent outbreaks spreading through your setting. We know this can be challenging for families, but it protects everyone in your community.
- **Letting fresh air in:** Keep rooms and shared spaces well-ventilated where possible. Letting fresh air in can remove air that contains virus particles and prevent others from breathing them in. Opening windows, even just for a few minutes, can remove stale air and reduce the spread of common winter illnesses.
- **Catch it, bin it, kill it:** Promote good hygiene by encouraging children and staff to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, throw used tissues in the bin, and wash hands afterwards. This is also a great learning opportunity to teach children about germs and keeping healthy.
- **Flu vaccination:** If eligible, encourage parents to make sure their child gets vaccinated against flu with the safe, painless and quick nasal flu vaccine. The flu nasal spray vaccine has already helped protect thousands of children in Wales. It's quick and could make all the difference this winter. Search 'Public Health Wales Vaccines' for more information

Ready to use materials

We've created a range of ready-to-use materials that can be used in nurseries and early years settings, including printable posters - [Handwashing poster](#), and assets that can be shared across channels.

These are available on our online asset bank [Beat Winter Viruses](#) - just register with your email address to access and download the resources you need. We'll be adding more resources as well shortly.

Some easy ways you could share these messages:

- Share them in your newsletters and via other communication channels for parents and staff such as social media channels, parent communication apps and settings website
- Demonstrate and encourage behaviours among staff
- Include reminders during daily routines like handwashing and snack time
- Use the poster in areas like toilets, kitchens and entrance areas
- Incorporate messages into play time and daily activities about staying healthy
- Share with parents during pick-up and drop-off conversations

Reminders of these simple everyday behaviours not only help to keep children, staff and families healthy, it also helps to develop a child's understanding and self-care skills.

Your leadership and support in promoting these simple everyday behaviours in your setting can make a significant difference in limiting the spread of seasonal illnesses, reducing absences, and protecting vulnerable members of the community.

Together, we can keep nurseries and early years settings safer and healthier throughout the winter months.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the health and wellbeing at your setting. For more information about the campaign, contact ishani.sen2@wales.nhs.uk