



Cold weather and your lungs

Top tips

- Make sure you keep warm by wearing **layers of clothing** when it's cold - thermal underwear can be very useful, along with woollen tights and socks and make sure you have a blanket or shawl to hand
- Wear **warm nightclothes** during very cold weather
- Try and stay as **active as possible** to generate heat - get up, move around and try to do some **exercise**
- The recommended temperature in the living room is 21°C (70°F) and 18°C (64°F) in the bedroom
- Keep your home **well ventilated** - Air quality inside the home becomes more important in winter as most of us spend more time indoors
- **Check the weather** before going out and elderly patients are advised to stay indoors as much as possible and keep warm
- If you have a bronchodilator, use it half an hour before going outside
- Make sure you **carry your medication** with you at all times as cold air can tighten the airways in lung disease patients making it harder to breathe
- Try to **breathe through your nose** instead of your mouth as this will help warm the air
- **Protect your lungs** by wearing a hood or scarf that covers your nose and mouth
- It is wise for patients with chronic lung conditions such as COPD or severe asthma to have the **seasonal flu jab**

Flu jab information for 2010/2011

We encourage all patients with a chronic lung condition to visit their GP and get the flu jab, which is usually available now. Since the H1N1 flu virus (swine flu) is one of the main strains of seasonal flu this winter, the World Health Organisation announced that H1N1 flu virus is included in the 2010-11 seasonal flu vaccine.

A seasonal flu vaccine is available free if you are over 65, have a serious medical condition or live in a residential home. If you do have a chronic lung disease it is important to have the flu jab right away!

Will I get side effects from the vaccine?

First of all, the seasonal flu jab does not usually cause side effects, although it can cause mild fever and slight muscle aches for a day or so. Despite the myths, Flu immunisation cannot cause flu, as there is no active virus in a flu vaccine. Allergic reactions to the vaccine are also rare.

For more information about the Seasonal Flu vaccine visit the NHS Choices website: www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Flu-jab.

Seasonal flu – the symptoms

Symptoms of seasonal flu includes a sudden fever (a temperature of 38°C/100.4°F or above); dry, chesty cough; headache; tiredness; chills; aching muscles or limb or joint pain; diarrhoea or stomach upset; sore throat; runny or blocked nose; and loss of appetite. Babies and small children with flu may also appear drowsy, unresponsive and floppy. If you have a chronic lung disease and are experiencing symptoms, we would encourage you to contact your GP immediately.

Further information

For the most current version of top tips for your lungs in cold weather, and for more information on lung conditions please visit www.lunguk.org.

For impartial advice about looking after your lungs in cold weather including winter fuel payments information please contact the BLF helpline on 08458 50 50 20 (Mon to Fri 10am to 6pm).

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