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To All Stakeholders in North Yorkshire
and York

Web: www.northyorkshireandyork.nhs.uk

10 October 2011

Dear Colleagues

Winter 2011/12 – helping people stay healthy this winter

I am writing to inform you of our forthcoming campaign to help people across North Yorkshire and York minimise the effects of winter this year.

Protecting yourself and your family against the cold is important, whatever your age, but it is particularly important if you are an older person, disabled, or have a long term condition (for example heart, lung or kidney disease).

In the UK, there are around 30,000 excess winter deaths each year, which are related to the colder weather between December and March. Although cold weather is a factor in excess deaths, Scandinavian countries for example do not have the same pattern of winter deaths - a strong indication that this is preventable.

A drop in body temperature contributes to these deaths by thickening the blood and restricting circulation. There is also an increased risk of injury from falls, and people are more prone to seasonal illnesses like flu.

NHS North Yorkshire and York is starting a campaign to provide simple advice, resources and information to help people minimise the affects of the winter months. The first stage in our campaign is hand hygiene.

Hand Hygiene - the single most important thing to reduce common illnesses

Following simple hand washing techniques can significantly reduce the spread of colds and flu as well as Norovirus (also known as winter vomiting) which can seriously affect the running of hospitals and care homes.

In addition, common illnesses such as flu can significantly increase absenteeism in the workplace during the winter months, putting added pressure on organisations and employees who have to cover extra work.



The most common way germs are spread is on your hands. Germs are often harmless but they can cause illnesses such as colds, flu and stomach upset. Proper hand washing with soap and warm water is the single most important thing you can do to help reduce the spread of infection and help protect yourself, your family and those around you.

We are encouraging people to wash their hands following a “six step technique” recommended by infection control professionals. To help illustrate the six step techniques of good hand washing, NHS North Yorkshire and York has produced a short video to demonstrate how it’s done.

This can be viewed via our website at www.northyorkshireandyork.nhs.uk

We have also produced a poster showing the six steps which I have attached with this letter.

Support

I hope you can support our campaign by sharing this information with your family, friends, colleagues and associates.

All the information we are producing will be put on our website. If you would like to request any particular resources, please call our Communications Team on 01423 859616.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Kirby', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Phil Kirby
Interim Director of Public Health
NHS North Yorkshire and York
GMC Number 2804550

ENC: Hand Hygiene Poster
