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Thrive LDN
towards happier, healthier lives



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Summer 2023: Key public health messages for London

Background

UKHSA London has collaborated with OHID London, NHS London and Thrive LDN to develop key public health messages for summer 2023. The summer season presents refreshed opportunities for promoting well-being, as well as varying health risks due to the seasonality of infections and increasing travel. We hope you find these messages useful, so please embed them in your regular communications as appropriate.

If you have any feedback on these messages, please contact tycie.west@ukhsa.gov.uk and lucy.trelfa@ukhsa.gov.uk.

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Childhood immunisations catch-up campaign for London

The NHS in London is delivering an immunisations catch-up campaign, offering polio and measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) jabs to unvaccinated or partially vaccinated children aged 1 to 11 years. Children will receive vaccines through a combination of primary school and community clinics, with a particular focus on supporting communities with the lowest levels of vaccine uptake.

Vaccination rates in London are lower than the rest of the country with 87.4% of children receiving all their polio vaccinations by the time they turn one year compared to 91.9% in England as a whole. Uptake for the pre-school booster for children aged 5 years is even lower at 73.8% in London compared to 84% in England.

While there are early signs of reduced spread of the poliovirus in London, UKHSA will continue to work with the NHS in London to ensure the next phase of the response helps maintain protection against polio, measles and other infections – in both the population overall in London and in communities at greatest risk.

Useful resources:

- Please refer to the [UKHSA polio stakeholder pack](#) for further key messages.
- You can find the full [NHS vaccine schedule here](#).
- NHS press release - [Children in London offered polio and MMR vaccinations through primary schools](#)

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COVID-19 spring booster

The covid vaccine still has a crucial role to play in protecting those at greatest risk of severe illness from the virus, including those with a weakened immune system as well as all aged 75 and above.

The 2023 spring coronavirus (COVID-19) booster programme is now underway. A spring booster dose is being offered to:

- adults aged 75 years and over
- residents in a care home for older adults
- individuals aged 5 years and over who are immunosuppressed

Those eligible are now able to book in on the National Booking Service or NHS App. The last date for the public to book spring boosters will be **30 June 2023**.

Useful resources:

- Read more in our [news story](#).
- Supportive COVID-19 spring booster and first and second dose [social media assets](#)
- Information [leaflet](#) which is free to order or download in a number of different languages.

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Protect your health when travelling abroad

If you're planning to travel outside the UK this summer, check health information for your destination before you go. You may need vaccines to protect you from serious diseases found in some parts of the world and may also need medication, for example to protect you against malaria.

Check the advice for your destination on [TravelHealthPro](#) and speak to your practice nurse, GP, pharmacist or a travel clinic ideally 4-6 weeks before travel to get appropriate advice for your trip. They can give you information about vaccinations and any extra precautions or medication you might need to take. Remember, it is never too late to get travel advice before you go; many travel clinics and pharmacies offer last-minute appointments.

Be sure to check the [COVID-19 rules and entry requirements](#) for the country you are travelling to.

Vaccines can prevent a number of different infections including some of the illnesses spread through food and water, such as Hepatitis A and typhoid and some of the diseases spread by insects. However, there are a number of diseases which are not vaccine preventable. Take basic precautions with food and water and insect bite avoidance, carry a basic first aid kit to manage common problems and know when to see medical help

Useful resources:

- Read more about [travel illnesses, vaccinations](#) and [travel health advice](#).

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Protect your health when travelling around the UK – open water swimming, tick safety and farm visits

Open water swimming

During warmer weather, going for a swim can provide much welcomed relief. If you are going into open water to cool-down, take care and follow local safety advice.

Open water swimming can increase the risk of gastrointestinal illnesses, or stomach bugs, which may cause diarrhoea and/or vomiting, as well as respiratory, skin, ear and eye infections.

Useful resources:

- [Swim healthy advice](#) including what to do before, during and after open water swimming.
- Surfers Against Sewage provide the [Safer Seas Service app](#), which uses open data from across the UK and water company updates to provide real-time water quality alerts for over 350 locations in the UK

Tick safety

There have been 3 cases of probable or confirmed tick-borne encephalitis acquired in England since 2019, including one linked to the Yorkshire area in 2022. The virus has also been detected previously in the Hampshire and Dorset, and Norfolk and Suffolk border areas but may also be present elsewhere as the tick species that carries the virus is widespread in the UK.

Woodlands and parks with deer such as Richmond Park and Bushy Park can attract ticks. Londoners who are visiting these areas or travelling to rural parts of the UK are reminded that they should seek GP advice if they are unwell after a tick bite. Seek urgent medical attention if you or someone you know:

- has symptoms of meningitis: severe headache, stiff neck, pain looking at bright lights
- develops neurological symptoms: a fit (seizure), if not known to be epileptic, sudden confusion or change in behaviour, weakness or loss of movement in arms and legs, facial drooping, change in vision or slurred speech

Useful resources:

- Read more in our [news story](#)
- UKHSA suite of materials including [tick awareness toolkit, leaflet and poster](#).
- Advice from the [Royal Parks](#) on avoiding tick bites in London's parks

Farm visits

Visiting a farm is an enjoyable and educational experience for many people, particularly children. However, visiting a farm carries a small risk of catching infections from animals or the environment. Although they may look well, farm animals can be the source of bugs and bacteria that can be passed to humans and cause illness. Some can be particularly serious for children or pregnant women.

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after you have touched animals, fences or other surfaces in animal areas, and before eating or drinking. Soap and water is preferred over alcohol gels or wipes which can be less effective at removing dirt.
- Make sure to supervise children during handwashing
- Only eat and drink in picnic or café areas of farms

Useful resources:

- [Guidance](#) on how to avoid becoming unwell after visiting a farm.

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Mpox - get your vaccine before July 2023

Fewer cases of mpox are now being reported in the [UK](#) and [internationally](#). While this decreasing trend is encouraging, it is important that anyone eligible for mpox vaccination comes forward for the vaccine before the vaccine programme ends this summer.

Vaccines remain available for gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men (GBMSM) at risk from mpox until –

- **16 June for the first dose**
- **31 July for the second dose**

[Find an mpox vaccination site](#) to get protected.

Anyone can get mpox but the recent outbreak has mainly affected gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. Travel-related cases can also occur. Mpox can spread through

close physical contact like skin-to-skin contact, kissing, sex or sharing things like bedding and towels.

It's important that people remain alert to the signs and symptoms of mpox which include recent unusual spots, ulcers or blisters on your body, fever, headaches, muscle aches, chills and exhaustion as well as swollen glands.

Call a sexual health clinic if you have a rash with blisters, anal pain or bleeding from your bottom and have either:

- been in close contact, including sexual contact, with someone who has or might have mpox (even if they've not been tested) in the past 3 weeks
- had 1 or more new sexual partners in the past 3 weeks
- been to west or central Africa in the past 3 weeks

Stay at home, avoid close contact with other people, and don't share towels or bedding, until you've been told what to do.

Useful resources:

- [NHS info on mpox](#), including how you can get mpox, symptoms and what to do if you think you have mpox.
- Latest UKHSA [update on mpox vaccines](#).
- [Find an mpox vaccination site](#) to get protected.

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Look after your sexual and reproductive health this summer

As we plan for holidays, festivals and other events this summer, remember to prioritise your sexual and reproductive health, as there have been rises in shigella, gonorrhoea and syphilis this year.

- **STI testing** is an important part of taking care of your sexual health and keeping you and your sexual partners safe. You should test for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) regularly as it is important to make sure they are diagnosed and treated as early as possible to prevent them from causing long term health complications.
- **Condoms** protect against both unplanned pregnancy and STIs. It's a good idea to buy condoms before going on holiday or to festivals to avoid problems with language and trying to find somewhere to buy them.
- **Contraception** is free on the NHS for everyone. If you're planning a trip abroad, make sure you have enough contraceptive to last you the duration of your trip, whatever method you use.

Useful resources:

- For more advice on sexual and reproductive health, go to the [NHS website](#).
- See also www.sexwise.org.uk www.longtimenosyph.info www.contraceptionchoices.org
- Sexual Health London offers a free [STI testing service](#) across most of London. Simply register with SHL.UK and complete an online consultation to order your free [STI test](#) kit.

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Prepare for extreme weather events - heatwave health and flooding risk

Extreme weather events such as heatwaves, wildfires and flash flooding can put vulnerable groups at risk. We want everyone to enjoy the warmer weather through the summer months, but during an extreme weather incident it's important to follow advice and guidance from local authorities, health authorities and the emergency services to help keep everyone safe and healthy.

Hot weather

London is experiencing hotter and drier summers that are further impacted by the Urban Heat Island effect (UHI). The UHI can cause London to be up to 10°C warmer than neighbouring rural areas. This is because the sun's rays are absorbed by hard surfaces rather than by vegetation such as trees, plants and grass. Radiation from our hard surfaces is released into the air as heat.

Hot weather is something many people look forward to and go out and enjoy, and much of the advice on keeping healthy in the heat is common sense. But it's worth remembering that sunny spells can pose health risks for some people.

Useful resources:

- Please find [hot weather guidance](#) to support the [Adverse Weather and Health Plan](#), including [Beat the heat: hot weather advice](#) for the public.
- A new hot weather communications toolkit for 2023 will be shared once available.
- There is additional advice for Londoners on the [GLA website](#), including a [map of indoor and outdoor 'cool spaces'](#) where Londoners can take respite on hot days.

Flooding

London has been impacted by multiple sources of flooding and the risk is increasing with climate change. The risk of severe flash flooding is higher during the summer months but can occur any time of the year. You don't need to live by water to be at risk of flash flooding so it's important that Londoners are aware of the risk in the capital and what they need to do to be prepared.

Useful resources:

- Please refer to the [UKHSA Flooding Communications Toolkit](#) for further key messages.
- There is additional advice for Londoners on the [GLA website](#).

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Summer food safety tips

Summer is a great time to enjoy a BBQ with family and friends. Yet warm weather and outdoor cooking can create conditions that enable bacteria to grow. London health protection teams tend to see increased cases of gastrointestinal illness at this time of year and are keen to remind Londoners of food safety.

Food poisoning can be avoided by following good food hygiene practices including:

- Washing your hands and cleaning utensils and surfaces

- Defrosting meat thoroughly, ensuring meat is not left outside of the fridge for long periods and is cooked at the right temperature for the correct length of time.
- Handwashing before preparing food and after handling raw meat can help prevent bacteria spreading by stopping cross-contamination.

Useful resources:

- More [BBQ food safety tips](#) from the Food Standards Agency
- [NHS advice on food poisoning](#)

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Improving air quality

Air pollution affects everyone who lives and works in London. However, some people – especially, children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions – are most vulnerable. People on low incomes or from ethnic minorities are also more affected by poor air quality, partly because they often live in the more polluted areas of London.

Although there have been significant improvements in the quality of London's air since the 1980's, there are still significant health gains to be made from improving air quality further.

Air pollution is a major cause of premature death and disease and is the largest environmental risk to public health in London. It poses significant health threats including increasing heart disease, stroke, lung disease, cancer and asthma exacerbation. It also leads to increased mortality and is associated with impacts on lung development in children.

There is increasing evidence showing health effects of exposure to lower levels of pollutants, and no obvious thresholds have been detected for the effects for air pollution at a population level. Many of the changes to improve outdoor air pollution also offer wider health and wellbeing co-benefits.

Indoor air pollution is also a growing problem, but it has been studied less than outdoors air pollution and further research is needed to understand the path to improving indoor air quality.

As individuals, we have little control over the level of pollution that we and our families breathe, and this must be seen as a societal problem to solve.

The London Air Quality and Health Programme Office is a multi-agency partnership hosted by UKHSA which seeks to ensure joined up action on air pollution across the health and care sector.

Useful resources:

- Find out more about the [London Air Quality and Health Programme Office here](#).
- [Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2022: air pollution](#)
- Sign up for free pollution alerts on the [airTEXT website](#)
- See air quality updates on [London Air](#)
- See more information on the [GLA's vision for cleaner air in London here](#).

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Take care of your mental health and wellbeing

Many Londoners may be struggling with their mental wellbeing, especially due to the increased cost-of-living pressures and the impact of a challenging winter and spring period. We know that when times are tough, it's important that we look after our own and each other's wellbeing.

[Getting Through This Together](#) is a collective campaign from [Thrive LDN](#) which aims to encourage Londoners to strengthen their social networks with family members and friends, and trusted others in their community, as well as highlighting the professional support and advice services which are available.

Key messages:

- We can all do our bit to spread hope and kindness, and to help each other.
- When times are tough, it's normal to feel a bit worried, frustrated or overwhelmed.
- London is full of amazing people and communities who have come together during the most challenging of times.
- If you need help for a mental health crisis or emergency, you should get immediate expert advice and assessment. It's important to know that support is available, even if services seem busy at the moment.

Free training offers:

In response to the increased cost-of-living pressures, Thrive LDN is promoting a series of free training offers to support London's key workers, community champions and volunteers:

- [Pre-recorded trauma-informed practice training](#), supporting individuals and organisations make a commitment to practice trauma-informed care.
- [Suicide prevention training](#), helping you identify warning signs and to feel comfortable having conversations about suicide and mental health.

Useful resources:

- The [GLA's Help With the Cost of Living online hub](#) contains a range of information to support Londoners, including on money and mental health.
- [Good Thinking has a helpful guide for Londoners](#) who are worried about the cost of living, which includes tips to boost your mental health and stay positive.
- [Thrive LDN](#) is a citywide movement to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Londoners. It is supported by the Mayor of London and led by the London Health Board partners.
- [Every Mind Matters](#) gives expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental wellbeing and make them part of your daily routine.
- [Five ways to wellbeing](#) are steps that have been researched and developed to help improve wellbeing.
- [NHS talking therapies](#) are effective and confidential treatments delivered by fully trained and accredited NHS practitioners. They can help with common mental health problems like stress, anxiety and depression. You don't need a GP referral to use this service.
- If you need help for a mental health crisis or emergency, you should get immediate expert advice and assessment. [Find where to get urgent help for mental health.](#)

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