

# NHS GRAMPIAN HEALTH PROTECTION NEWSLETTER



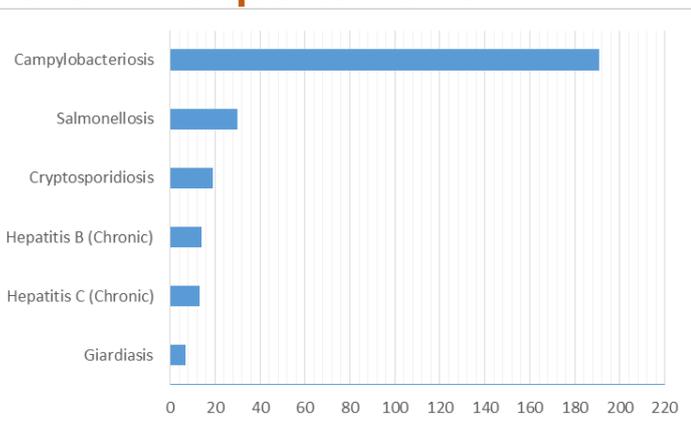
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## In this issue...

Page(s)

2023 Third quarter review .....	1
Primary Care Chat.....	1
Vaccination Programme – Winter 2023.....	2
Winter preparedness for Care Homes.....	2
Advice for visiting rural attractions .....	5
General Information.....	6
Get in touch .....	6

## 2023 Third quarter review



The most common infections notified to the Health Protection Team in the third quarter of the year (July-September), are summarised in the chart above. Campylobacteriosis made up the majority of the cases, followed by Salmonella and Cryptosporidium. During this period the Health Protection Team also dealt with a variety of infectious agents including; E. coli (STEC), invasive group A streptococcal infection (iGAS), Pertussis (whooping cough), Legionellosis, Typhoid, Shigellosis, and Meningitis.



## Primary Care Chat

### Plea when giving enteric results.

When we call patients to complete enteric questionnaires, patients are sometimes surprised because they have already been told by their GP practice that their result is negative. We believe this is because the results are reported in two parts. The first part of the report relates to C.diff, the next day another report for the same sample is released, this reports cryptosporidium, giardia and campylobacter. When giving patients stool sample results please be mindful that the results being given are the full result. Thank you

### Use of antidiarrhoeal medication

We hear from cases of enteric disease that they have taken volumes of antidiarrhoeals, either prescribed by their GP or advised by their pharmacist. Diarrhoea is the body's way of expelling something it doesn't like such as bacteria and toxins. By taking antidiarrhoeals patients retain these pathogens for longer and often experience prolonged and intense symptoms.

Could we please ask colleagues to be mindful of NICE guidance which describes acute diarrhoea as lasting less than 14 days, however if it is in a returning traveller or it contains blood, it should be investigated to exclude infection. NICE also advises that treatment of acute diarrhoea with antidiarrhoeal drugs, anti-emetics and probiotics is not routinely recommended for use in primary care.



## Vaccination Programme – Winter 2023

As we move through autumn our vaccination colleagues are already working hard on the delivery of the Winter Vaccination Programme. The winter programme will aim to complete most vaccinations by early December, but the programme will run until 31 March 2024.

The key objectives of the Winter Programme are to:

1. Protect those in society who continue to be more at-risk of severe COVID-19 and flu.
2. Increase levels of immunity in those at higher risk of severe COVID-19 and flu during winter 2023 in order to prevent severe illness, hospitalisation and death.
3. Focus on a co-administration model, offering flu and COVID-19 vaccinations at the same appointment where possible, to those who are eligible.



Evidence shows that administration of both vaccines together is a safe and efficient way to deliver maximum protection over winter months. Last winter, over 89% of COVID-19 and flu vaccines were co-administered.

Getting vaccinated is the safest and most effective way to protect against viruses circulating through the winter months. Optimising people's protection through vaccination over the winter months will also help to reduce pressures on the NHS.

NHS Scotland will contact people with details of their appointment, or prompt them to book one. Depending on individuals' selected communication preferences, this will be by email, text, or by post in a white, NHS Scotland branded envelope. You can [rearrange your appointment](#) if necessary. Evening and weekend clinics are available too and if it's more convenient, you can book or reschedule your appointment to a vaccination clinic closer to where you work or visit regularly.

### Eligibility

Individuals aged 5 – 64 who are not in a higher risk group, are no longer eligible for any COVID-19 vaccinations. Frontline HSCWs are eligible for both flu and COVID-19 vaccinations this winter.

#### • COVID-19 and Flu vaccination

- Residents and staff in care homes for older adults
- Those aged 65 years and over
- Those aged 6 months to 64 years in a clinical risk group, as defined in tables 3 and 4 of the COVID-19 chapter of the Green Book
- Frontline health and social care workers (HSCWs)
- Those aged 12 to 64 years who are household contacts of people with immunosuppression\*
- Those aged 16 to 64 years who are carers\*
- Pregnant women

- **Flu Vaccination only**

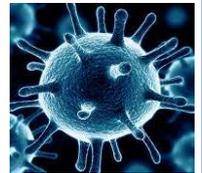
- Those aged 50-64 years without an underlying clinical at-risk condition\*
- Those aged 18-64 years with an eligible flu-only clinical risk condition\*
- Young carers under the age of 16 years
- Non frontline NHS workers (as part of the NHS Occupational Health Scheme)
- Nursery, primary and secondary school teachers and pupil facing support staff
- Prison population, prison officers and prison support staff who deliver direct services
- School age pupils (primary and secondary)
- Children aged 2-5 (not at school)
- Children aged 6 months to 2 years in a risk group

\* As defined in Green Book [Immunisation against infectious disease - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immunisation-against-infectious-disease)

### **Winter Preparedness for Care Homes**

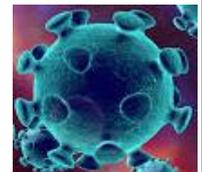
It is getting to that time of year when the nights are beginning to “draw in” and winter will be upon us before we know it. The Health Protection Team are advising care home staff to be prepared for a potential increase in respiratory and gastrointestinal illness within the community and care home settings in this period. This could lead to an increase in outbreaks of COVID-19, Flu and Norovirus within care homes, and residents are at particular risk of illness within this closed setting.

This is a good time to remind staff to ensure they are up-to-date with their Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) knowledge and training. Excellent practice of IPC ensures the safeguarding of residents, visitors and staff from infectious disease. It should be part of everyday life and applied consistently to ensure safe and effective resident care.



### **COVID-19 - Who should be tested?**

- Symptomatic residents in adult care homes (PCR) \*
- Residents being discharged from hospital to a care home (Lateral Flow Test (LFT))
- Individuals who have a health condition which means they are eligible for COVID-19 treatment



\* Note a LFT is not recommended in this instance, as this test only identifies COVID-19 infection and will not pick up infections caused by other respiratory pathogens such as flu and other respiratory viruses.

**It is no longer a requirement for Health and Social Care Staff to test for COVID-19 if they develop respiratory symptoms. If not well enough to be at work or if they have a fever they should stay at home until they feel better and are fever free.**

### **Where to access PCR swabs?**

<b>Care Home Partnerships</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Telephone Number</b>
Moray	The Oaks, Morriston Road, Elgin, IV30 6UN Buckie Hospital Dufftown	01343-562450 01542-832081 01340-820215
Aberdeenshire	Banff Chalmers Hospital Fraserburgh Hospital Peterhead Hospital–MIU Turriff Hospital Inverurie Hospital Aboyne Hospital Banchory Glen O’Dee Huntly Hospital MIU Kincardine Hospital	01261-819127 01346-513151/585120 01779-478234 01888-563293 01467-672735 01339-886433 01330-822233 01466-765016 (MIU) 01569-765150
City	Foresterhill Health Centre In hours 0800-1730 Out of Hours	01224-559140 01224-655680

### **Having difficulty sourcing PCR swabs?**

Please escalate to the Health and Social Care Partnership Care Home Support Team.

### **Where to send a PCR swab**

In hours - deliver to the registered GP practice for onward transportation to the hospital laboratory.  
If out with GP hours - the swab can be stored till the next working day, or delivered to the South Tower, laboratory reception on the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary Site or Dr Grays.

### **Be prepared for winter checklist**

- Regular refreshers of donning and doffing, mask use and hand hygiene practice (4 moments of hand hygiene)
- Familiarise staff how to proceed if they have a resident with suspected respiratory or gastrointestinal illness
- Reiterate staff uniform policy (Bare below elbow)
- Ensure plenty of stock of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)
- Staff cohorting and contingency plan for staff absence
- Ensure contact information of Health and Social Care Partnership and Health Protection Team are readily available
- Staff to be familiar with current up to date guidance
- Encourage staff to be vaccinated for Seasonal flu and COVID-19

## Advice for visiting rural attractions in Autumn and Winter

We are now at the start of autumn and with that we know that many people and families will be visiting outdoor activity venues such as petting zoos, pumpkin patches, farms etc. These can be very fun activities but as always carry some risks we have some helpful tips to keep you and your loved ones safe. We should be mindful that animals have 'bugs' that can cause illness in people, some of these bugs live in their tummy and some can be on the body of these animals. Examples of these 'bugs' are Cryptosporidium, Giardia, Salmonella and E. coli O157, which although rare, can cause serious illness.

These illness are usually transmitted through faecal-oral route. 'Bugs' can be passed to your mouth by putting hands on faces, or fingers in mouths after touching animals in the petting and feeding areas. Transmission can also be through contact with animal droppings or contaminated surfaces around the environment, before washing hands thoroughly with running water and liquid soap.

### Key Facts

- Remember hand hygiene is important!
- Wash hands with running water before leaving premises (If no access, use wet wipes, but ensure as soon as hand washing facilities become available they are used)
- Alcohol gel/hand rub is not effective against these types of bugs and germs.
- Wash hands after touching or feeding animals or contact with surfaces in animal areas such as fences and gates
- Wash hands after playing on playing equipment
- Wash hands before and after eating and drinking, only eat and drink in designated picnic/café areas
- Wash hands after changing/cleaning footwear
- Supervise children at all times and especially around handwashing



- Clean buggy-bike wheels / outdoor shoes prior to taking indoors
- Do not kiss animals or put your mouth near them
- Avoid contact with sheep and lambs if pregnant
- Cover cuts and grazes with waterproof dressings
- Do not suck fingers or put hands, pens, pencils or crayons etc. in mouths
- Do not drink from farm taps unless it clearly states 'drinking water'
- Do not eat and drink while touching animals or walking around animal area nor taste animal foods
- Do not eat food that has fallen to the ground

### Checklist of items to take on Visit

- Wet Wipes
- Change of shoes after visit
- Change of clothes

### Becoming Unwell After a Visit

If you or your family become unwell or have symptoms of abdominal pain, sickness and/or diarrhoea (sometimes bloody) within two weeks of a rural visit, please get in touch with your local GP or 111 out of hours for advice. Furthermore, if anyone in the family develops bloody diarrhoea, please seek immediate medical advice and inform them that there has been a recent visit to a rural setting.

### Useful links from NHS inform for further information

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/outdoor-health/bugs-and-germs/avoiding-bugs-and-germs-outdoors>  
**E- Coli O157**

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/escherichia-coli-e-coli-O157>

**Educational Resources to learn about microbes for children**

<https://www.e-bug.eu/>

## General Information



It is also important to remember that NHS Inform has a huge amount of information about a wide range of infections and has helpful guides if you or someone around you develop symptoms. Additionally, if you're feeling anxious, stressed, low, having problems sleeping or dealing with grief, check out the Mind to Mind section to find out how you can improve your mental wellbeing by hearing what others have found helpful. Travel information is also available when planning a holiday.

Kindly refer to the websites below to access the most up-to-date information.

**NHS Inform;** <https://www.nhsinform.scot/>

**Healthy know how;**  
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/healthy-know-how>

**Mind to Mind;**  
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/mind-to-mind/>

**Fit for Travel;**  
<https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home>



## Is there something we should know?



We welcome your input for topics to cover or news to share as we are always working to improve our communication. If you think there is a topic we should be covering or have a piece to contribute, kindly let us know by leaving us your suggestions via the HPT email.

## Get in touch

If you have any questions regarding communicable disease/health protection feel free to get in touch with us.

**NHS Grampian Health Protection Team.**  
**Address: Summerfield House, 2 Eday Road, Aberdeen.**  
**Phone: 01224 558520**  
**Email: [gram.healthprotection@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.healthprotection@nhs.scot)**