



DECEMBER NEWS

From Newton HHS

Stay Healthy This Holiday!

Holiday gatherings and colder weather have more folks heading indoors, creating a perfect environment for respiratory viruses! Flu, COVID-19, and RSV are circulating at high rates in Newton and across the Commonwealth.

To help keep our community healthy, there are many steps we can take to prevent the spread of respiratory illness:

- **Hand hygiene** remains the best tool to prevent all kinds of illness because not all respiratory viruses spread in the same way.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes** with a tissue, or if a tissue is not available, cover them with an elbow, not a hand.
- **Cleaning high-touch surfaces** – Flu, COVID-19 and RSV are spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. They can also be spread by touching a surface that has the virus on it and then touching your face. Disinfecting high-touch surfaces like doorknobs is crucial to prevent illness.
- **Wearing a face covering** protects against respiratory droplets and is effective in preventing respiratory illness.
- **Avoiding exposure** to people who are sick is one of the best ways to protect your family from illness.
- **Get Vaccinated** against [COVID-19](#) and the [flu](#).

If you or someone in your family is under the weather, use this guide to help you talk with your provider about the best course of treatment!

Common Symptoms of a Cold, the Flu, and COVID-19

Learn more at www.nia.nih.gov/flu



Common Symptoms	Cold	Flu	COVID-19
Fever and/or chills		✓	✓
Headache		✓	✓
Muscle pain or body aches		✓	✓
Feeling tired or weak		✓	✓
Sore throat	✓	✓	✓
Runny or stuffy nose	✓	✓	✓
Sneezing	✓		
Cough	✓	✓	✓
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing		✓	✓
Vomiting and diarrhea		✓	✓
Change in or loss of taste or smell			✓

[Learn More](#)

Winter is Coming! Are You Prepared?

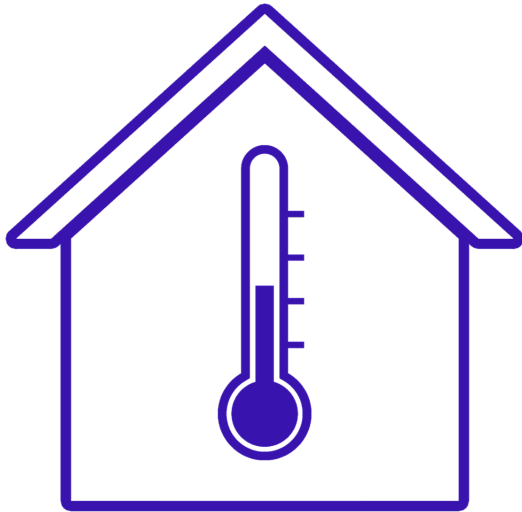
Don't wait until it's too late! Prepare for winter weather now.

- Know what to do before, during, and after a winter storm.
- Have emergency supplies in place at home, at work, and in the car.
- Stay off the road during and after a winter storm.
- Have a carbon monoxide alarm in place, especially if using alternative heating devices.
- Use safe heating devices.



[Winter Weather Resources](#)

Need Help With Heating Bills?



The ABCD (Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.) Home Energy Assistance Program, also known as Fuel Assistance, provides financial assistance to income-eligible households for heating bills.

NEW APPLICANTS can now [apply online](#) for the 2022-2023 heating season.

RETURNING APPLICANTS can either complete a recertification on their own, or call the Social Services Division for assistance at 617-796-1420.

[Learn More](#)

Firearm Safety: Keeping Kids Safe

Firearms are now the leading cause of death in the US for children and teens, surpassing motor vehicle crashes ([NIH](#)). And it's not just children; in 2020, firearm-related injuries were among the 5 leading causes of death for people ages 1-44 in the US ([CDC](#)). That is why now more than ever it is important to remind people about practicing gun safety to help ensure this trend does not continue. Everyone has a role to play when it comes to gun safety whether it's being a responsible gun owner, a parent, or community member.

Keeping Kids Safe in Other Homes – Ask!

“Is there an unlocked gun in your home?” It's a simple question, but it has the power to save lives. More than a third of all unintentional shootings of children take place in the homes of their friends, neighbors, or relatives ([AAP](#)). Before your child visits another home, as you'd ask about pets, allergies, supervision, and other safety issues, add one more question, “Is there an unlocked gun in your home”? If there is, reconsider allowing your child to play there or talk to them about keeping the guns unloaded and locked.

This question is just as important for teens and adults too! Not only for parents dropping their kids off to play, but for teens taking their first babysitting job, young adults moving into a group living situation, or the care of an elderly family member, especially those who may suffer some sort of memory loss. Don't assume the home doesn't have a gun – about 1 in 3 homes (with and without children) have guns ([NIH](#)).

Ask About Firearms Before a Playdate

If it's not safe, invite their child over to your home instead



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Mine too! OK.

I always ask families where my kids go about firearms. Do you have guns at home?

Yes, we do have a gun.

Great. Jimmy is so curious, and always getting into things. How are your firearms stored?

We put the gun in a safe and lock up the ammo separately. See you at 3!



Safe Storage - Preventing Unintentional Shootings

The safest home is one without guns. If there are guns in the home, it is crucial that they be stored safely. Countless tragedies have occurred when kids found guns that parents thought were well-hidden or safely stored. Between 2015-2020, there were at least 2,070 unintentional shootings by children that resulted in 765 deaths and 1,366 nonfatal gun injuries ([Everytown](#)). Hiding a gun is not enough. Kids are curious and they usually know where a family keeps a gun. If you decide to keep a gun in your home, you can reduce the chances of children being injured by following these tips:

- All guns should be LOCKED and UNLOADED
- Lock away ammunition SEPARATELY
- No one aside from trained gun owners should have the code to locks or the locations of keys

What You Can Do

- **ACT** responsibly and always store your own guns locked, unloaded, ammunition stored separately, and out of reach from children. From gun locks to gun safes, there are a variety of safety options best suited for your home.
- **ASK** family, friends, and community members about access to unlocked and/or loaded guns in the home.
- **TALK** with your community about responsible gun ownership and educate people on safety tips.
- **LEARN** about safe storage and policy options, such as the red flag law, available in your area which help reduce the risk of gun related incidents.

[Learn More](#)

(617) 796-1420

City of Newton, MA



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



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