

# Aylesbury Surgery Health & Engagement Forum



Issue: 38



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## A Christmas Message

As Christmas draws near, everyone at **Aylesbury Surgery** sends warm wishes to our patients, families, carers, and neighbours. This season reminds us of **hope, faith, kindness, and the joy of giving**—the things that make our community strong and special.

This time of year is about kindness, reflection, and coming together, and we are incredibly grateful for the compassion and generosity shown by our community throughout the year.

## Sharing Joy and Goodwill

We would like to say a heartfelt **thank you** to everyone who contributed to our **Christmas Toy Appeal**. Your kindness will help bring smiles, comfort, and joy to children and families who need it most during the festive season. Acts like these truly reflect the spirit of Christmas and the strength of our community **caring, compassion, and love for others**. Small acts of kindness can make a big difference, now more than ever.

## Caring for One Another

As we enjoy the celebrations, please remember to **look after yourselves and those around you**, especially with flu circulating this winter:

- Ensure you and your loved ones are up to date with **flu vaccinations** if eligible
- Practise good hygiene, rest if unwell, and seek advice if symptoms worsen
- Check in on older relatives, neighbours, or anyone who may be lonely

## Looking Ahead to the New Year

Christmas is about more than gifts—it's about **sharing love, spreading kindness, and strengthening community bonds**. As we step into 2026, let us carry this spirit forward: supporting one another, celebrating our connections, and embracing hope, faith, and goodwill.

**From all of us at Aylesbury Surgery:** may your Christmas be filled with peace, love, and joy, and may the New Year bring health, happiness, and hope.

**Mr Rajash Mehta**—Practice Manager and



Mr Rajash Mehta—Practice Manager of Aylesbury Surgery & Chair of Aylesbury Surgery Health & Engagement Forum

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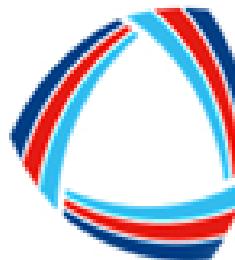
# Caring for Those Who Served: Veteran Support

**Every veteran  
deserves care  
that recognises  
their service — and local GP surgeries are com-  
mitted to delivering exactly that.**

Veterans have given so much in service to our country, and many continue to face unique health challenges long after leaving the armed forces. Physical injuries, chronic conditions, mental health issues such as PTSD, and the long-term effects of demanding deployments can make accessing healthcare complicated. At our GP surgery, we are committed to providing care that recognises these challenges, treats veterans with dignity and understanding, and ensures their health and wellbeing are prioritised.

One of the ways we do this is through the RCGP Veteran Friendly accreditation, a national programme designed to support GP practices in delivering tailored, veteran-specific care. This accreditation encourages practices to train staff to recognise the specific needs of veterans, implement processes to identify and flag veteran patients, and provide accessible, compassionate, and coordinated care. It ensures that veterans are never treated as “*just another patient*,” but as individuals whose service and experiences are understood and respected.

At Aylesbury Surgery, we have taken practical steps to support the local veteran community. We ensure veteran patients are flagged in our system, so all clinicians are aware of their status and specific needs.



**Armed Forces Veteran  
friendly accredited  
GP practice**



Our staff receive training on veteran health issues, including mental health, trauma-informed care, and navigating NHS services. We actively provide access to specialised services such as Pharmacy First, mental health referrals, and social support networks, so that veterans can receive the right care quickly and efficiently.

We also reach beyond the surgery walls, engaging with social subscribers to offer information, outreach, and guidance, ensuring no veteran feels isolated or unsure about where to turn for help. Through these initiatives, we aim to build trust, reduce barriers to care, and provide a safe, welcoming environment for all veterans and their families.

By prioritising veteran-specific care, our surgery is committed to giving back to those who have given so much. Every veteran deserves care that is informed, compassionate, and tailored to their needs, and we are proud to play our part in ensuring they receive it.

**Honouring Those Who Served: Veteran Care at Our GP Surgery**

Every veteran deserves care that recognises their service, respects their experiences, and meets their individual needs.

Veterans often face health challenges that are different from the general population. Physical injuries, chronic conditions, and mental health issues such as PTSD can make navigating the NHS more difficult. Our



Armed Forces veteran  
friendly accredited  
GP practice



## We are an Armed Forces veteran friendly accredited GP practice.



This means that, as part of the health commitments of the Armed Forces Covenant, we have a dedicated clinician who has a specialist knowledge of military related health conditions and veteran specific health services. This is important in helping individuals who have served in the Armed Forces get the care and treatment that is right for them.

If you have served in the UK Armed Forces, please let your GP know to help ensure you are getting the best possible care.

To find out more, ask your nurse or GP.

GP surgery is committed to providing compassionate, tailored care to ensure that those who have served feel supported and understood.

### RCGP Veteran Friendly Accreditation

We are proud to participate in the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) Veteran Friendly accreditation. This national programme helps GP practices:

Identify veteran patients on their systems

Train staff in veteran-specific health needs

Implement trauma-informed and sensitive care approaches

“Veteran care isn’t just a process — it’s about recognising the sacrifices behind every patient we see.”

### BSol General Practice - Veteran Accreditation

The recent Remembrance Sunday milestone saw Birmingham and Solihull practices meeting the needs of Armed Forces Veterans when offering services and making onward referrals.

NHS England’s recommended framework for delivery is the RCGP Veteran Friendly Accreditation. The General Practice Provider Support Unit have been supporting practices to deliver the framework to ensure

the needs of the Veteran community are met. The benefits of the framework to the Veteran community include:

A simple process for identifying veterans

Clear referral pathways to specialist veteran healthcare support

Faster access to priority services

**In 2024, BSol was 2nd from the bottom in the region for practice accreditation, but as of October 2025 BSol has achieved:**

**92% (162) practice accreditation**

**BSol Greatest number of accreditations in 2025**

**BSol 2nd in the region for accreditation**

**BSol 12th nationally for accreditation**

Quote:-

**“We are proud of our Veterans and we are proud we are offering this service”**

**- Rajesh Mehta – Aylesbury Surgery Practice Manager**



# Understanding Diabetes: Causes, Types, Management, and Prevention

Diabetes isn't one disease. There are several types of diabetes and each has different causes, symptoms and treatments.

Understanding which type of diabetes you're dealing with is really important in properly managing it. Let's take a look at what sets apart the many different types of diabetes, with expertise shared by diabetes experts, including an endocrinologist and registered dietitians.

## What is Diabetes?

Diabetes occurs when the body cannot produce enough insulin or cannot use insulin effectively. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas that allows glucose to enter cells for energy. Without proper insulin function, glucose builds up in the blood, leading to high blood sugar levels (hyperglycaemia) and long-term complications affecting the heart, kidneys, eyes, nerves, and blood vessels.

## Types of Diabetes

### 1. Type 1 Diabetes

- An autoimmune condition where the immune system attacks the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas.
- Usually diagnosed in children or young adults, though it can develop at any age.
- Requires lifelong insulin therapy to survive.

Symptoms can develop rapidly, including frequent urination, excessive thirst, unexplained weight loss, fatigue, and blurred vision.

### 2. Type 2 Diabetes

- The most common form, often linked to life-style factors and genetic predisposition.
- The body either doesn't produce enough insulin or cannot use it effectively (insulin resistance).
- Often develops gradually in adults over 40, but increasingly seen in younger people due to rising obesity rates.

Management includes healthy eating, physical activity, oral medications, and sometimes insulin.

### 3. Gestational Diabetes

- Occurs during pregnancy when the body cannot produce enough insulin to meet increased needs.

Usually resolves after birth but increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life for both mother and child.

## Prediabetes

Prediabetes is an in-between stage where blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to diagnose diabetes.<sup>10</sup>

"Prediabetes often has no obvious symptoms, so it is important to check blood work annually and request an HbA1c test."

People with prediabetes are at an increased risk for developing a bunch of different conditions, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke.<sup>10</sup> But type 2 diabetes can sometimes be prevented or delayed with lifestyle changes like losing weight, eating a nutritious diet and exercising.

"It is very important to identify prediabetes early



because interventions can prevent progression to diabetes."

## Symptoms of Diabetes

Early recognition is vital. Common symptoms include:

- Frequent urination (polyuria)
- Excessive thirst (polydipsia)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue and weakness
- Blurred vision

Slow-healing wounds or frequent infections

If untreated, diabetes can lead to serious complications like cardiovascular disease, kidney failure, nerve damage, and vision loss.

## Risk Factors

Type 1 Diabetes:

- Family history
- Certain genetic markers

Autoimmune conditions

Type 2 Diabetes:

- Overweight or obesity
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Unhealthy diet
- High blood pressure and cholesterol

Family history or ethnic background (e.g., South Asian, African-Caribbean)

## Gestational Diabetes:

- Age over 25
- Obesity

- Family history of diabetes

## Diagnosis

Diagnosis is made through blood tests:

- Fasting blood glucose: measures sugar after overnight fast
- HbA1c test: shows average blood glucose over 2–3 months
- Oral glucose tolerance test: used for gestational diabetes or uncertain cases

## Management of Diabetes

Management aims to keep blood sugar within target ranges, reduce complications, and maintain quality of life.

## Medications

- Type 1: Insulin therapy is essential

Type 2: Oral medications (e.g., metformin) may be used initially, progressing to insulin if needed



## Monitoring

- Regular blood sugar checks at home
- Routine HbA1c testing

Blood pressure and cholesterol management

## Complications

Poorly controlled diabetes can lead to:

- Cardiovascular disease: heart attacks, strokes
- Kidney disease: leading to dialysis in severe cases
- Neuropathy: nerve damage causing pain or numbness



- Retinopathy: vision loss or blindness
- Foot problems: ulcers, infections, sometimes amputation

## Prevention

While type 1 diabetes cannot currently be prevented, type 2 diabetes is largely preventable:

### Tips for Managing Diabetes

Get regular exercise: Exercise helps regulate blood sugar and is also good for heart health. Approximately 30 minutes of physical activity at least five times per week.



Make a habit of resistance training. "Resistance training increases muscle glucose uptake, which makes the cells more sensitive to insulin and helps lower blood sugar."

Stay hydrated: "Water supports blood glucose balance, energy and overall health and well-being."

Be consistent with your mealtimes: "Eating at consistent times of day supports your body's circadian rhythm, which influences insulin release and blood sugar regulation. Irregular meal timing can cause larger blood sugar spikes and impair insulin response."

Eat balanced meals: Pair protein and healthy fats with fiber-rich carbs to slow digestion and help keep blood glucose steady,

Prioritize complex carbohydrates: It's important

to limit refined sugars, but don't cut all carbohydrates. Complex carbohydrates—like starchy vegetables, beans and whole grains—are digested more slowly and less likely to cause sharp spikes in blood sugar.

Work closely with your health care team: See a health care provider, such as an endocrinologist, to talk through any questions or concerns you have about diabetes. It can also be helpful to work with other health care professionals, like a registered dietitian and a certified diabetes care and education specialist to learn more about managing diabetes.

### Diabetic Eye Checks (Retinal Screening)

#### Why it matters:

High blood sugar can damage the small blood vessels in the retina (the light-sensitive part of the eye), leading to diabetic retinopathy.

#### Without screening:

You might not notice vision changes until significant, irreversible damage has occurred.

#### Regular eye checks can:

Detect early signs of retinopathy before vision is affected. Allowing treatment (like laser therapy or injections) that can prevent blindness.

Regular Monitoring for other eye conditions, more common in diabetes, such as glaucoma and cataracts. Can be caught earlier and treated. Reviews are usually done every 6 months and 12 months.



# UNDERSTANDING DIABETES

## A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS



### TYPES OF DIABETES

- Type 1 Diabetes  
The body cannot make insulin
- Usually diagnosed in children or young adults
- Requires lifelong insulin treatment



- Type 2 Diabetes  
The body not istivesing properly or making too little
- Often linked to lifestyle and genetics
- Managed with aold of diet, exercise, medication or insulin



### DIAGNOSIS

- Fasting blood sugar test
- HbA1c test  
(shows average are-gns.iis-crveek)
- Oral glucose tolerance teet (for pregnancy or unclear cases)



### MANAGING DIABETES

- Lifestyle Changes
- Eat a balanced, low-sugar diet
- Exercise regularly (at least 150 minutes per week)
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Avoid smoking and limit alcohol



### COMMON SYMPTOMS

- Frequent urination
- Excessive thirst
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue or weakness
- Blurred vision
- Slow-healing wounds

### RISK FACTORS

- Being overweight or inactive
- Family history of diabetes
- Age over 40 (for type 2)
- Ethnic background (South Asian or African-Caribbean)
- High blood pressure or cholesterol

### PREVENTING TYPE 2 DIABETES

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Stay active
- Eat a balanced diet
- Monitor blood sugar-pathy
- Eye problems (retinopathy)
- Foot ulcers or infections

### KEY TAKEAWAY

With early diagnosis, proper treatment and lifestyle changes, people with diabetes can lead active, healthy lives. Awareness, support, and regular monitoring are essential for managing complications and prevention.

# The Magic of Giving: Why Christmas Toy Appeals Matters



As the festive season approaches, the sparkle of Christmas lights and the warmth of family gatherings begin to fill the air. But for thousands of children and their families across the UK, the holidays can be a stark reminder of hardship. That's where Christmas toy appeals step in — not just as charitable campaigns, but as lifelines of joy, dignity, and hope.

## More Than Just Toys

At first glance, a toy might seem like a simple gift. But for a child living in poverty, it can mean the world. It's a symbol that someone cares. It's a moment of magic in a year that may have been filled with uncertainty. Toy appeals ensure that no child wakes up on Christmas morning feeling forgotten.

- Emotional impact: Receiving a gift reinforces a child's sense of worth and belonging and boost self esteem.
- Family relief: For parents struggling financially, toy appeals ease the pressure and allow them to focus on creating loving memories.

## The Power of Hope and planting seeds for the future

The impact of a Christmas toy appeal doesn't end when the wrapping paper is torn away. It can ripple through a child's life in powerful ways:

Children are natural believers — in magic, in kindness, in the possibility of good things to come. Christmas is a time when that belief is at its strongest. Toy appeals nurture this belief, reminding children that even in difficult times, hope is real and help is near.

- Restoring faith: A surprise gift can reaffirm a child's belief in generosity and community.
- Building resilience: Acts of kindness during childhood lay the foundation for empathy and strength in adulthood.
- Creating memories: These moments become cherished stories that children carry with them for life.
- Encouraging imagination: .
- Breaking cycles of poverty: Positive childhood experiences can inspire ambition and resilience, helping children envision a future beyond their current circumstances.

In short, a toy today can become a stepping stone toward a brighter tomorrow.

## Community Coming Together

Toy appeals are also a powerful reminder of what communities can achieve when they unite. From local businesses to schools and churches, the collective effort to bring joy to children is a testament to shared humanity.

- Volunteers and donors become the unsung heroes of Christmas.

- Local organisations often know exactly where help is needed most.
- Every contribution, no matter how small, adds up to something extraordinary.

Together, we can make sure every child feels remembered, valued, and inspired this Christmas.



## A Heartfelt Thank You for Your Toy Donations

A huge **thank you** to everyone who contributed to our Christmas Toy Appeal! Your generosity will bring **joy and happiness** to children and families who need it most this festive season.

All the toys collected are being donated to **Thrive Together**, a wonderful charity that supports **vulnerable children, families experiencing poverty**, ensures families feel **valued, cared for, and supported**, giving them hope and happiness at Christmas and beyond.

Your donations are more than just toys—they are a **message of kindness, care, and community spirit**.

Every gift makes a difference, and your generosity truly reflects the spirit of Christmas—caring, sharing, and spreading hope.

Thank you for helping to make this festive season brighter for so many families! We couldn't have done this without you.



*Thank You*



# Spreading Holiday Cheer

As a community, we are often reminded of the importance of caring for our most vulnerable — and this includes our elderly residents living in care homes. While many people receive visits, cards and presents, there are sadly some older residents who are often forgotten, with few or no visitors throughout the year.

The visit was about much more than giving presents. It was about spending time, sharing smiles, listening to stories, and reminding residents that they are valued members of our community. Simple moments — a conversation, a laugh, a warm handshake — meant just as much as the gifts themselves.

Our staff were deeply moved by the residents' reactions. For some, it was the joy of receiving a thoughtful gift; for others, it was the comfort of human connection and knowing that people care. These moments reflect the values at the heart of our surgery: compassion, dignity, and community support for people of all ages.

We are incredibly proud of our team for giving their time and kindness, and grateful to everyone who helped make this visit possible. Acts like these remind us that healthcare goes beyond appointments and treatments — it is about humanity, kindness and looking after one another. Together, we can continue to ensure that our elderly residents feel remembered, respected and never alone.



From Right to left Dr Bhomra (Aylesbury Surgery ) with the Manager Jacqueline Mclean ( Warren Farm Lodge ), Mr Raja Mehta (Aylesbury Surgery) and Louise Harris & staff from Warren Farm care home

The moment was filled with thoughtful acts of kindness, as volunteers and staff handed out beautifully wrapped gifts to residents, spreading happiness and cheer.

Residents were seen enjoying the company of their friends and caregivers, sharing laughter and heartfelt moments. The gift-giving was not just about presents but about creating meaningful connections and reminding everyone of the joy of being together during this special time of year.

It was a beautiful reminder that the holidays are about more than just material gifts—they are about love, kindness, and the joy of giving. Proving that the true essence of Christmas lies in the warmth of human connection.

# A Celebration of kindness and Community



Residents at  
Warren Farm  
Lodge care  
home

## Mr Rajash Mehta - Celebrates Diwali at 10 Downing Street

Mr Rajash Mehta was honoured to attend the Diwali celebrations at 10 Downing Street on Sunday, 13th October, Hosted by the Prime Minister's Office, where distinguished guests, Members of Parliament, and community leaders gathered to mark the Festival of Lights.

The evening was a vibrant celebration of Diwali's timeless message — the triumph of light over darkness, hope over despair and knowledge over ignorance. The event highlighted the rich cultural heritage and contributions of the Hindu, Sikh, and Jain communities across the United Kingdom. The event brought together Members of Parliament, community leaders, and guests from across the country to celebrate Diwali —

The atmosphere was filled with warmth, positivity, and a shared sense of joy and belonging. Reflecting on the occasion, Mr Mehta said:

“ It was a real honour to celebrate Diwali at No. 10 and to share in such a wonderful event that recognises the rich cultural heritage and contribution of our communities. It warmed my heart to see people from all backgrounds coming together in the spirit of unity and friendship — a reminder of what makes Britain such a vibrant and diverse nation. Diwali reminds us that hope and light will always guide us through challenging times, and it is a time to celebrate kindness, community, and togetherness.”

Mr Mehta extended his warmest wishes to all those celebrating Diwali and Bandi Chhor

**May the festival bring peace, happiness, and prosperity to all—  
Happy Diwali! - Mr Rajash Mehta**



Mr Rajash Mehta—Practice Manager and Chair of the Aylesbury Surgery Health & Engagement forum attending as a guest at No 10





# Dr Saab Health & Lifestyle Channel

## Discover Our Health & Lifestyle

### YouTube Channel ☀️

Looking to take simple steps toward a healthier, happier lifestyle? Our **Dr Saab Health & Lifestyle YouTube Channel** is designed to help you do just that! From practical health advice to everyday wellbeing tips, our videos are packed with easy-to-follow guidance.

#### What You'll Find on the Channel:

- \* **Health Tips** – Trusted advice on common health concerns, prevention, and healthy living.
- \* **Lifestyle Guidance** – Simple changes to boost your energy, mood, and overall wellbeing.
- \* **Nutrition & Recipes** – Quick, healthy meal ideas and facts about balanced diets.
- \* **Fitness & Movement** – Easy exercises to keep active at home or on the go.
- \* **Community Support** – Positive, encouraging content designed to motivate and inspire.



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# Enjoying Christmas Meals Without Compromising Your Health

The festive season is full of delicious meals, sweet treats, and indulgent drinks. While enjoying these foods in moderation is part of the fun, overindulging can pose serious health risks—especially if you have conditions such as **high blood pressure (hypertension), diabetes, or heart disease**.

## 1. The Risks of Overeating for People with Hypertension

- **Salt intake:** Traditional Christmas foods such as roast meats, gravy, stuffing, and processed snacks are often high in salt. Excess salt can raise blood pressure, increasing the risk of **heart attacks, strokes, and kidney problems**.
- **High-fat foods:** Rich sauces, creamy desserts, and fried foods can worsen cholesterol levels and increase strain on the heart.

**Large meals:** Consuming a very large meal can lead to bloating, discomfort, and short-term spikes in blood pressure.

### Tips:

- Choose **smaller portions** of high-salt dishes and balance with vegetables and salads.
- Opt for **herbs and spices** instead of salt when preparing food.
- Spread your meals through the day rather than eating one extremely large meal.

## 2. The Risks of Overeating for People with Diabetes

- **Blood sugar spikes:** Christmas meals often include high-sugar foods like desserts, chocolates, and puddings, which can rapidly increase blood glucose levels.
- **Carbohydrate overload:** Large portions of starchy foods such as potatoes, bread, and pasta can worsen blood sugar control.

**Hypoglycemia risk:** Overeating, followed by delayed insulin or medication adjustments, can

lead to fluctuations in blood sugar levels.

### Tips:

- **Portion control:** Serve smaller amounts of starchy and sugary foods, and fill your plate with vegetables and lean proteins first.
- **Balance meals:** Combine carbohydrates with protein and healthy fats to reduce rapid sugar spikes.
- **Monitor blood sugar:** Check your glucose levels more frequently during the festive period and adjust medication if advised by your GP.



## 3. Other Considerations

- **Alcohol:** Drinking too much alcohol can interfere with blood pressure, blood sugar, and medications. Pace yourself and alternate alcoholic drinks with water.
- Alcohol can raise blood pressure and affect blood sugar.
- Avoid sugary cocktails and limit high-calorie festive drinks.

### Stay Active

- A short walk after meals improves digestion and helps regulate blood sugar.



- Light stretching or household chores count as activity.
- Encourage family walks or festive games to combine fun and movement.

- **Hydration:** Drink plenty of water to help your body cope with salt and sugar intake.

#### 4. Tips for a Healthier Festive Season

- Plan your meals and snacks in advance.
- Use smaller plates to avoid overeating.
- Prioritise vegetables, lean meats, and fibre-rich foods.
- Allow yourself treats, but **moderation is key**.
- Maintain routine medication schedules and consult your GP if you're unsure about adjustments.

### Enjoying Christmas Meals Safely:

#### Tips for Hypertension & Diabetes

Christmas meals are full of delicious treats, but for people with **high blood pressure** or **diabetes**, it's important to balance indulgence with health. Here are practical tips and simple swaps to help you enjoy the festive season safely.

#### 1. Portion Control

- **Use smaller plates:** Helps prevent overeating by making portions look larger.
- **Fill half your plate with vegetables:** Steamed, roasted, or salads add fibre, vitamins, and volume without extra calories, salt, or sugar.
- **Protein first:** Lean meats, fish, or beans should be a quarter of your plate to support blood sugar control and satiety.
- **Carbohydrates:** Limit starchy sides like potatoes, bread, or stuffing to a quarter of your plate. Opt for **smaller portions or wholegrain versions**.

#### 2. Reduce Salt and Sugar

- **Salt swaps:** Use herbs, garlic, lemon, and spices instead of salt in cooking and sauces.

- **Sweet swaps:** Try fruit-based desserts, baked apples, or smaller servings of puddings. Dark chocolate in moderation is a good festive treat.

#### 3. Healthier Meal Ideas

Traditional Dish	Healthier Swap
Roast turkey with salty gravy	Roast turkey with home-made herb gravy or lemon juice
Roast potatoes	Oven-roasted sweet potato wedges with olive oil spray
Stuffing	Wholegrain stuffing with added vegetables
Mince pies	Fresh fruit mince tarts or small portion fruit crumble
Creamy desserts	Greek yogurt with berries and cinnamon

#### 4. Monitor Your Health

- Check blood pressure and blood sugar more often during the festive season.
- Stick to medication routines.
- Contact your GP if you notice unusual spikes or feel unwell.

#### Key Takeaway:

You **don't need to miss out on festive foods**—the secret is moderation, balance, and smart swaps. By managing portions, reducing salt and sugar, staying active, and monitoring your health, you can enjoy Christmas safely while keeping your blood pressure and blood sugar under control.



# Homelessness in Winter: Understanding the Causes and How We Can Help

When we picture homelessness, we often think of someone sleeping rough on the streets. But homelessness takes many forms: people staying in hostels, sofa-surfing with friends, living in temporary accommodation or facing imminent eviction. Winter magnifies the dangers—cold, damp, and isolation dramatically increase the risks of illness and harm.

## Why People Become Homeless

Homelessness rarely happens overnight or for a single reason. More often, it's the result of several pressures building up over time. Common causes include:

- **Loss of affordable housing:** Rising rents and a shortage of social housing leave many unable to find somewhere to live.
- **Low income or job loss:** Redundancy, zero-hours contracts or illness can quickly erode savings, making it hard to pay rent or bills.
- **Relationship breakdown:** Family or partner conflicts, domestic abuse, or leaving care can force people to leave home suddenly.
- **Health challenges:** Physical illness, mental health conditions, or substance dependency can all contribute to losing housing and make it harder to regain stability.

**Systemic barriers:** Delays in benefits, lack of local support, and limited access to legal advice can push vulnerable people further into crisis.



These issues can affect anyone. The people you see sleeping rough are just the visible tip of a much larger iceberg of “hidden homelessness.”

## Why Winter is Especially Dangerous

Low temperatures, damp conditions and reduced daylight increase risks of hypothermia, respiratory illness, depression, and injury. People without secure shelter also face heightened vulnerability to crime.

## How We Can All Make a Difference

- **Donate Warm Items:** Coats, sleeping bags, and blankets are vital in cold weather.
- **Support Local Charities:** Financial contributions help fund emergency beds, outreach services and medical care.
- **Volunteer:** Even a few hours at a local shelter or soup kitchen can help someone stay safe and warm.
- **Raise Awareness:** Share information on local services and helplines so those in crisis know where to turn.

**Report Concerns:** Use [www.streetlink.org.uk](http://www.streetlink.org.uk) to alert outreach teams if you see someone sleeping rough. In emergencies, call 999.

Homelessness is complex, but compassion is simple. By understanding the causes and acting together, we can ensure fewer people face the bitter cold without support.

Please see page

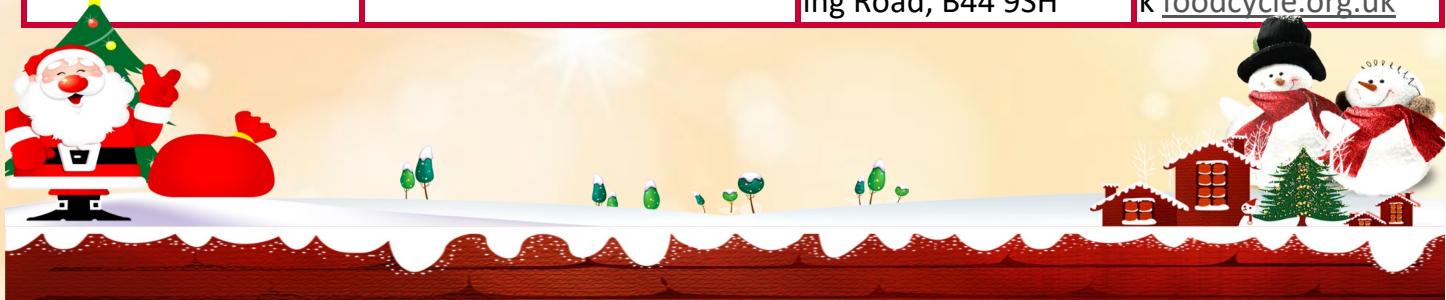
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# Key local services & shelters / supported housing in or near Kingstanding / Birmingham Council / statutory services and helplines

These are essential, because the council has a legal duty (in many circumstances) to assist those who are homeless or at risk.

Name	What they do / notes	Address / area	Contact
Calmer Supported Living	They provide rooms and support for disadvantaged/homeless adults	430 Kingstanding Road, Birmingham, B44 9SA	0121 661 7560 <a href="#">RoomMatch</a>
New Roots Ltd	Same day accommodation for vulnerable adults across Birmingham	Birmingham (accept referrals)	0121 429 3933 <a href="#">newrootsltd.co.uk</a>
Crisis Skylight Birmingham	Centre for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness	Digbeth, Birmingham	0121 348 7950 <a href="#">Crisis</a>
SIFA Fireside	Support service for single homeless people in Birmingham	—	0121 766 1700 <a href="#">bsmhft.nhs.uk+1</a>
Salvation Army (Birmingham)	Homeless / shelter support, social help	Birmingham	0121 236 6554 <a href="#">Birmingham City Council</a>
Birmingham Settlement (Kingstanding)	Community centre offering support (advice, food, etc.)	600 Kingstanding Road, Birmingham, B44 9SH	0121 250 0770 <a href="#">birminghamsettlement.org.uk+1</a>
FoodCycle Birmingham Kingstanding	Free hot meals (no booking needed)	Birmingham Settlement, 600 Kingstanding Road, B44 9SH	Email: <a href="mailto:kingstanding@foodcycle.org.uk">kingstanding@foodcycle.org.uk</a> <a href="#">foodcycle.org.uk</a>



# If you, or someone you know needs help this winter you are not alone

Call the **out-of-hours / emergency line** (0121 303 2296) if you are without shelter tonight and are over 18.

- If under 18, call 0121 675 4806.
- Walk into the **Newtown Housing Options Centre** (during office hours) to speak to a housing adviser.
- Contact **Crisis Skylight Birmingham** or **SIFA Fireside** to see if they have availability or can refer you to a hostel

spot.

- Try **New Roots Ltd** — they aim to provide same-day accommodation (if space allows).
- Use **FoodCycle** and **Birmingham Settlement** to access meals, warmth, a place to rest during the day, and support networks.
- Call **Shelter** on 0808 800 4444 to get legal housing advice and information about rights.



Service	What to do / when to call	Contact number
<b>Birmingham City Council – Homelessness Services</b>	Speak to a housing adviser (office hours)	0121 303 7410 (select option 3) <a href="http://BirminghamMind+3BirminghamCityCouncil+3bsmft.nhs.uk+3">BirminghamMind+3BirminghamCityCouncil+3bsmft.nhs.uk+3</a>
<b>Birmingham City Council – Out of hours / emergency support</b>	For 18+ needing accommodation outside office hours	0121 303 2296 <a href="http://BirminghamCityCouncil+2BirminghamCityCouncil+2">BirminghamCityCouncil+2BirminghamCityCouncil+2</a>
<b>For under 18s</b>	If 16 or 17 and need emergency help	0121 675 4806 <a href="http://BirminghamCityCouncil+2BirminghamMind+2">BirminghamCityCouncil+2BirminghamMind+2</a>
<b>St Basils Youth Hub</b>	For under 25s (if no dependent children)	0300 303 0099 <a href="http://BirminghamCityCouncil+1">BirminghamCityCouncil+1</a>
<b>Shelter England – National housing advice</b>	For legal and housing advice (not accommodation)	0808 800 4444 <a href="http://ShelterEngland+2ShelterEngland+2">ShelterEngland+2ShelterEngland+2</a>
<b>Birmingham Mind – Homelessness / housing advice</b>	Advice & support, particularly when mental health is involved	Call 0121 675 5779 (Newtown Housing Options Centre) <a href="http://BirminghamMind">BirminghamMind</a>

# Caring for Yourself and Others This Christmas

Self-Care isn't being selfish its essential to looking after your wellbeing . It can help you enjoy the season and support others too.

The holidays can be a wonderful time to reach out and spread kindness. Many people, especially the elderly or those living alone, find this time of year isolating. A small act of care can truly brighten someone's day.

## Ways to make a difference

- **Check in on others:** A friendly chat, phone call, or knock on a neighbour's door can lift someone's spirits.
- **Share warmth:** Donate spare coats, blankets, or food to local charities or community projects.
- **Be kind to yourself:** Make time to rest, eat nourishing meals, and enjoy moments of calm amid the bustle.
- **Offer a helping hand:** Help someone with shopping, clearing snow, or posting a card.
- **Volunteer locally:** Many local organisations need extra hands during the winter period — even a few hours can help.
- **Reach out if you're struggling:** There's no shame in asking for help. You're never alone.
- **Heat your home to at least 18°C (65°F),** especially in rooms you use most often. Keep blankets and hot water bottles close by.
- **Close curtains** at dusk and use draught excluders to retain heat.

Let's make this season about community, compassion, and connection. Sometimes, the smallest gestures leave the biggest impact.

## Winter Health for Older Adults

If you know an older person who lives alone, check in on them regularly. A friendly conversation, a warm meal, or helping with errands can mean a

great deal — and could even prevent illness or accidents.

Cold weather can seriously affect older adults' health, particularly for those with long-term conditions such as heart, lung, or mobility issues. Staying warm, active, and supported can prevent illness and keep spirits high.



## Eating and Drinking Well

- Try to eat **regular hot meals** and snacks, even if your appetite is smaller in winter.
- Drink plenty of fluids — tea, coffee, and soups all help keep you hydrated.
- Stock up on cupboard essentials before cold or icy weather arrives.

## Staying Active and Safe

- Keep moving indoors — gentle stretches or walking around the room helps maintain circulation and strength.
- Keep floors clutter-free and ensure good lighting to prevent falls.
- Wear sturdy footwear with good grip when going outside.
- Make sure walking aids or frames are in good condition

## Stay Health Aware

- Ensure you have **enough prescription medication** before the festive closures.
- Contact your pharmacy for advice on over-the-counter cold or flu remedies.
- If you feel unwell, don't wait — contact your GP or **NHS 111** early for advice.

# Winter Wellbeing Special

As the year draws to a close and the festive season begins, it's easy to get caught up in the rush of preparations, shopping, and celebrations. But winter can also bring added pressures — from shorter days and cold weather to loneliness or health worries.

## Managing Stress During the Festive Season

For many, December is a time of joy, family, and reflection — but it can also feel overwhelming. The combination of social expectations, financial strain, and emotional memories can take a toll on mental health.

Remember: it's okay not to feel festive all the time. Taking care of your mental wellbeing is just as important as looking after your physical health.

## Simple ways to manage stress

Keep things realistic: You don't have to do everything. Focus on what really matters to you and let go of unnecessary pressure.

- Plan quiet moments: Whether it's reading, walking, or listening to music — small breaks help your mind reset.
- Stay active: Even gentle exercise, such as a short daily walk, can boost mood and reduce anxiety.
- Eat well and rest: Try not to skip meals and make

time for proper sleep — your body and mind will thank you.

- Connect with others: Talking to friends or family about how you feel can help lighten the load.
- Seek support: If stress or sadness feels overwhelming, don't face it alone. Support is available from:

**Samaritans: 116 123 (24/7 free helpline)**

**Mind: 0300 123 3393**

**NHS 111 : for urgent mental health advice**

Winter can be challenging, but it's also a time for reflection, kindness, and connection.

By caring for ourselves and those around us, we can help ensure everyone stays safe, healthy, and supported through the colder months.

we wish you a peaceful, happy, and healthy festive season.—

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