



## Heads Up from Health Protection- January 2026

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*This month's edition includes:-*

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- *Start the New Year with a Healthy Resolution!*
  - *Online Cancer Screening Checker*
  - *Cold Weather Practical Advice*
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## Screening Saves Lives—Start Your Year Right!

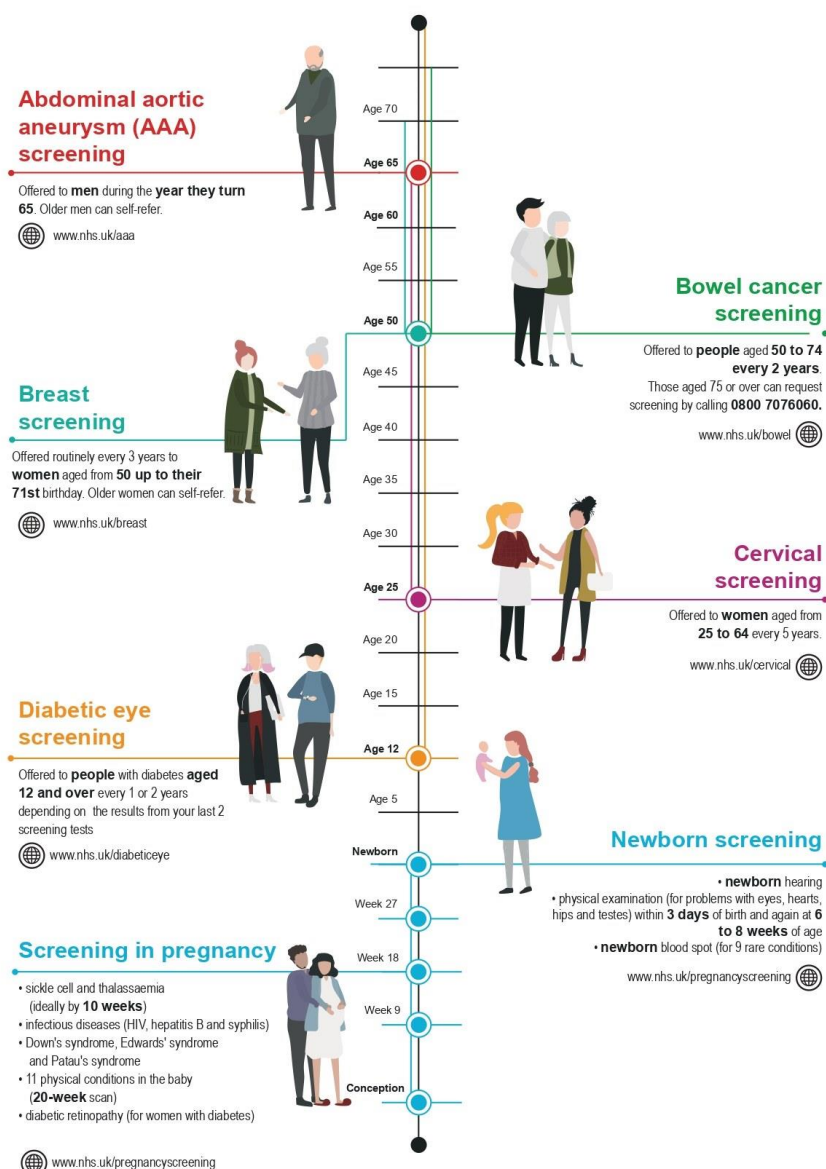
As we step into 2026, it's the perfect time to make resolutions that truly matter—your health.

England's **national screening programmes** are designed to help detect potential health issues early, when treatment is most effective. By taking part, you're making a positive choice for your future and supporting a healthier community.

This bulletin will guide you through each programme, explain who it's for, and how you can get involved. Whether it's a simple check or a life-saving test, these screenings are an easy way to keep your health on track.

**Your health, your resolution—make it count in 2026!**

### Population screening timeline



## Breast Screening

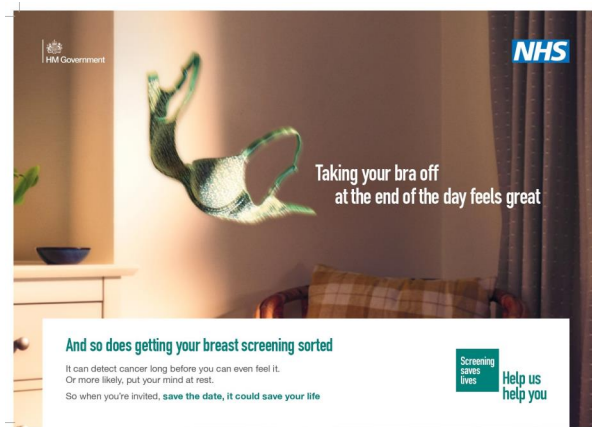
Breast screening uses mammograms—low-dose X-rays—to detect breast cancer early, often before lumps can be felt. Women aged 50–71 are invited every three years. Early detection improves treatment success and survival rates.

*In 2023–24, uptake reached **70.0%**, meeting the national target for the first time since before the pandemic ([NHS England](#)). Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women, making screening vital.*

### Who is invited?

- Women **aged 50 up to their 71st birthday** who are registered as female with a GP. Your first invitation is usually between **ages 50 and 53**, then **every 3 years** until 71.
- **After 71:** No automatic invitations, but you can **self-refer every 3 years**.
- **Trans and non-binary people:** If registered as female, you'll be invited automatically. If registered as male but have breast tissue or have been on long-term feminising hormones, you can request screening.
- **High-risk individuals:** May be offered earlier or more frequent screening (e.g. strong family history).

If you get an invitation, make it your resolution to attend. **Early detection matters!**



## Cervical Screening

Cervical screening checks for high-risk human papillomavirus (HPV) and abnormal cells in the cervix that could lead to cancer. The test is quick and usually takes less than 5 minutes at a GP surgery or clinic. Detecting changes early means they can be treated before cancer develops.

*In England, **68.8%** of people aged 25–64 attended their screening in 2023–24 ([NHS England](#)). This programme is essential because cervical cancer often has no symptoms until it's advanced.*

### Who is invited?

- Women and people with a cervix **aged 25 to 64**.
- **Frequency: Ages 25-64: Every 5 years.**
- **First invitation:** Sent around your 25th birthday.
- **Trans and non-binary people:** If you have a cervix, you are entitled to screening even if not automatically invited (e.g., registered as male).

Book your test—it's quick, simple, and could save your life.



## Bowel Cancer Screening

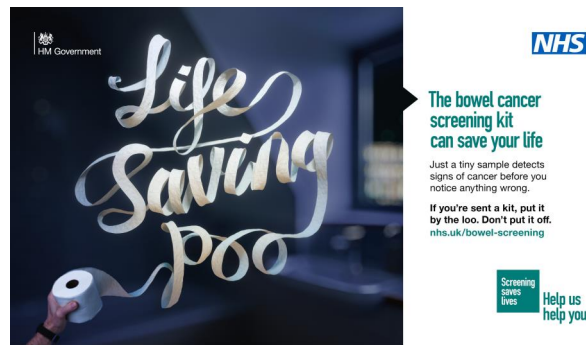
The bowel screening programme sends a simple home test kit (FIT test) to people aged 50–74. The test looks for tiny amounts of blood in stool, which can be an early sign of cancer or polyps. Detecting these early can reduce the risk of cancer or catch it at a treatable stage.

*In 2023–24, **71.8%** of eligible people completed the test ([NHS England](#)). Bowel cancer is the second biggest cancer killer, so early detection saves lives.*

### Who is invited?

- **Everyone aged 50 to 74, every 2 years.**
- **How:** A [home test kit \(FIT\)](#) is sent by post.
- **After 74:** You can **request a kit every 2 years** by calling **0800 707 6060**.
- **Requirement:** Must be registered with a GP and live in England.

Make it your goal to complete the kit when it arrives—your future self will thank you.



## Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening

AAA screening involves a quick ultrasound scan to check for a swelling in the abdominal aorta, the main blood vessel in the body. Men, who are more at risk of an aortic aneurysm than women, are invited when they turn 65. If an aneurysm is found early, it can be monitored or treated before it ruptures, which can be fatal.

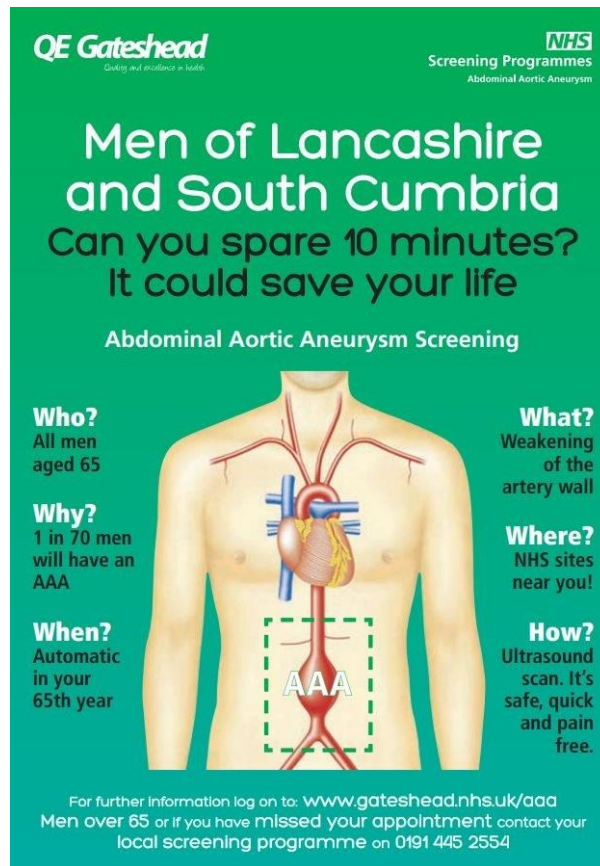
*In 2023–24, **82.1%** of eligible men were screened ([NHS England](#)). This simple test prevents sudden, life-threatening emergencies.*

### Who is invited?

- **Men during the year they turn 65** (based on GP registration as male).
- **Others:** Men over 65 who missed screening can **self-refer**. Trans women and non-binary people assigned male at birth are eligible.
- **Not routinely offered to:** Women, men under 65, or anyone already treated for AAA.

*(The Gateshead Trust manage the screening programme for England, but all services/scanning are delivered locally in your area)*

Say yes when invited!



## Diabetic Eye Screening

Diabetes can damage the small blood vessels in the retina, leading to diabetic retinopathy—a major cause of sight loss. Screening detects changes early so treatment can prevent vision problems.

### Screening process:

- Annual eye checks are available to **everyone aged 12 or over with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes**.
- Quick, painless test using digital retinal photography.
- Images are then reviewed for signs of damage.

### Key fact:

Diabetic eye screening helps protect the sight of over **2 million people with diabetes** each year ([NHS England, 2024](#)).



## Lung Cancer Screening

The Targeted Lung Health Check programme offers a low-dose CT scan to people aged 55–74 who are at higher risk of lung problems and lung cancer (usually smokers or ex-smokers). Lung cancer often has no symptoms until late stages, so screening helps find it early when treatment is more effective.

*Since 2019, **5,037 lung cancers** have been detected, with **76%** diagnosed at stage 1 or 2 ([NHS England](#)). This programme is crucial for improving survival rates.*

### Who is invited ?

- People **aged 55–74** who are **current or former smokers**.
- Must be registered with a GP and live in an area where the programme is available (rolling out nationally by 2030). Check [Where is my nearest screening service](#).
- Screening starts with a **Lung Health Check**, and if high risk, a **low-dose CT scan** is offered. [\[nhs.uk\]](#), [\[cancerresearchuk.org\]](#)

Lung cancer often has no symptoms until the late stages. Screening can find cancer early, making treatment more successful and saving lives.

***If you are a smoker and would like to quit, contact the Smokefree Lancashire service [Smoke-Free Lancashire](#) to find the best option of support.***





## Cancer Screening Online Checker

Stand Up To Cancer has launched a simple online screening checker which helps users determine which breast, bowel and cervical screening programmes they may be eligible for, provides trusted information from Cancer Research UK, and directs users to further support where needed.

Click on the link below to start your eligibility check

[Screening Checker | Stand Up To Cancer](#)

This checker is provided by Cancer Research UK for information only, as part of the Stand Up To Cancer campaign. It does not provide medical advice or replace advice from your doctor or healthcare provider. If you have symptoms or health concerns, contact your GP. Cancer Research UK does not arrange screening.





## Top Tips for Cold Weather



Winter can bring lovely frosty days and fun in the snow, but cold weather can have a negative effect on health with an increase in rates of illness and avoidable deaths. The new year has brought with it a drop in temperature, frost and snow as well as the first named storm, [Storm Goretti](#). It doesn't need to be freezing, negative health effects can start at outdoor temperatures as mild as 4 to 8°C.

Cold weather can affect even healthy people, but there is lots of advice to help keep you well and reduce illness, trips and falls.

Whilst exposure to cold weather can affect **ANYONE**, some people are at greater risk, these include: -

- older people (aged 65 years and over).
- anyone with long-term health conditions such as cardiovascular or respiratory disease, or a mental health condition.
- pregnant women.
- people at risk of falls.
- people who live alone and may be unable to care for themselves.
- people who are housebound or have low mobility even if temporarily e.g. after an operation or accident.
- people living in deprived circumstances.
- young children (particularly those aged 5 and under).
- people with learning disabilities.

As temperatures drop, it's important to stay safe, warm, and well-prepared. Here are some practical tips:

- **Heat Your Home Safely:** Aim to keep your main living area at least 18°C. Use draught excluders and thermal curtains to retain heat.
- **Use a Hot Water Bottle:** A cost-effective way to stay warm in bed or while sitting. Always follow the safety instructions.
- **Check Your Thermometer:** Keep a room thermometer handy to monitor indoor temperatures, especially for vulnerable individuals.
- **Drive with Caution:** In icy conditions, allow extra time, check your tyres, and keep an emergency kit in the car- [Prepare a winter kit for your car - Met Office](#). For more tips to help you drive safely and legally visit [Winter driving advice | RAC Drive](#),
- **Warm Hubs:** If heating is a challenge, visit your local warm hubs— they provide safe, heated spaces offering comfort and community support. Search our simple and interactive online directory to find nearby warm spaces as well as information about what they offer: [Warm spaces - Lancashire County Council](#)
- **Stock Up on Essentials:** Keep a supply of canned soup, porridge oats, and other warming foods. A flask of hot drink can be a great companion.
- **Look Out for Others:** Check in on neighbours, especially older adults or those with health conditions.

You can find lots more useful advice on savings, services and winter activities in Lancashire at [Winter in Lancashire - Lancashire County Council](#) and there is lots of advice for elderly people at [Winter advice for the elderly | Age UK](#) and in their [winter wrapped up information guide](#).

#### Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather

There are some other things you can do to reduce your risk and [keep warm and well](#).

- Try **not to sit still for more than an hour or so**. If moving around is difficult, stretch your arms and legs to help you stay warm.
- It can help stop the spread of germs if you [ventilate the room](#) for a few minutes before and after you have visitors. If it's not too cold, keep a window open during their visit.
- When out and about, **wear shoes with good grip** to avoid slips and falls on slippery or icy surfaces.
  - Ensure your vehicle is winter ready. Check tyres have sufficient tread, that your lights and heater work and the antifreeze is topped up. If you have planning a journey, check the weather conditions before you set off.
- If bad weather is [forecast](#), **plan ahead** and check that you've got enough medication and food in case it's harder to leave the house. If you cannot leave the house, try to identify others who might be able to help pick up food and medication on your behalf.
- If you are **worried about someone else's health, contact your local pharmacist, your GP or NHS 111**, who will all be able to offer advice and support.
- If you suspect [hypothermia](#), call NHS 111 or dial 999 in an emergency. Signs include shivering, slow breathing, tiredness, confusion, and pale, cold skin.

## Keeping warm and well: staying safe in cold weather

### Plan ahead



Check the weather forecast and the news



Make sure you have sufficient food and medicine



Take simple measures to reduce draughts at home

### Keep yourself warm



Heat rooms you spend most time in to 18°C if you can



Keep bedroom windows closed



Wear multiple layers of thinner clothing

### Prepare your home



Check what financial support may be available for you



Use energy saving tips to save money on heating



Make sure appliances are safe and working well

### Look after yourself and others



If you're eligible, get vaccinated against flu and COVID-19



Check on others who may be vulnerable



Get help if needed. Call NHS 111 or in an emergency 999

For more information go to:

[Top tips for keeping warm and well this winter - www.GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

## Hot Water Bottles

Rubber hot water bottles will degrade over time and the general recommendation is to replace them every two to three years. This flower wheel indicates date of manufacture (image below shows 4th month of 2021) , for more information click [here](#)





## Meet the team





1 - image designed by AI copilot

**The Health Protection Team are getting out and about, speaking to local residents to raise awareness on the national screening and vaccination programmes available.**

**In next month's edition:-**

- Shingles
- BRCA Genes and Cancer Risk: A Simple Guide
- MMRV reminder

[Health Protection Archive: All Previous Issues in One Place](#)

Each month, we've shared updates, insights, and resources to support our work and keep everyone informed. Below, you'll find links to all past issues—feel free to revisit any that you may have missed or want to explore again.

[Heads Up From Health Protection Archives](#)

This information has been produced by the Health Protection team at Lancashire County Council

If you require a printable version of this Health Protection bulletin please email the team at [healthprotection@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:healthprotection@lancashire.gov.uk)

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