

## Having Winter Infection report: December 2023

---

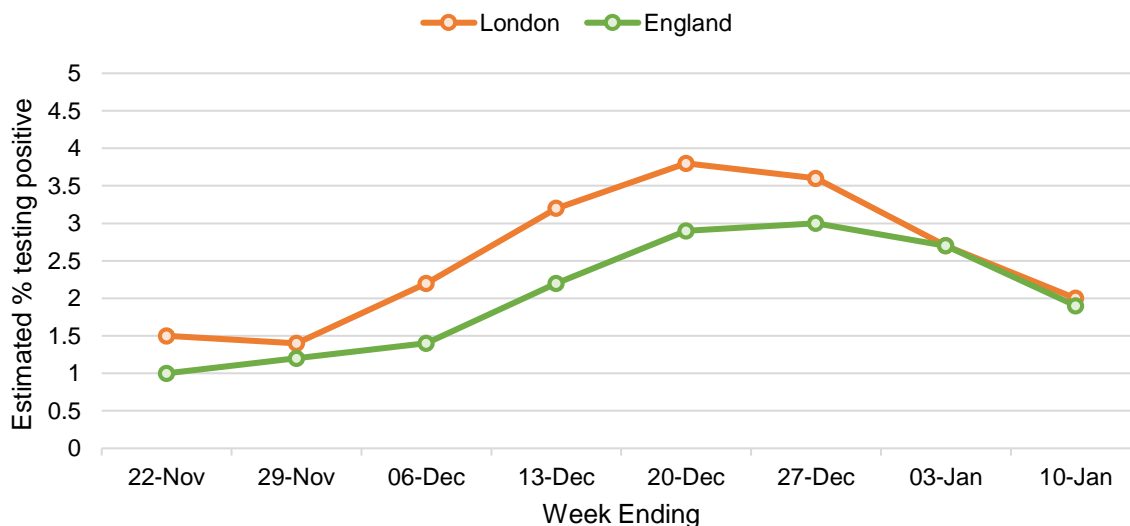
This is a summary report on those illnesses and infections that become more common in winter and place extra pressure on healthcare services. It brings together various sources of data to give an overview and provides guidance on how to reduce the risks of infection. Further detailed data will be added to this report over the winter as it becomes available.

---

### COVID-19

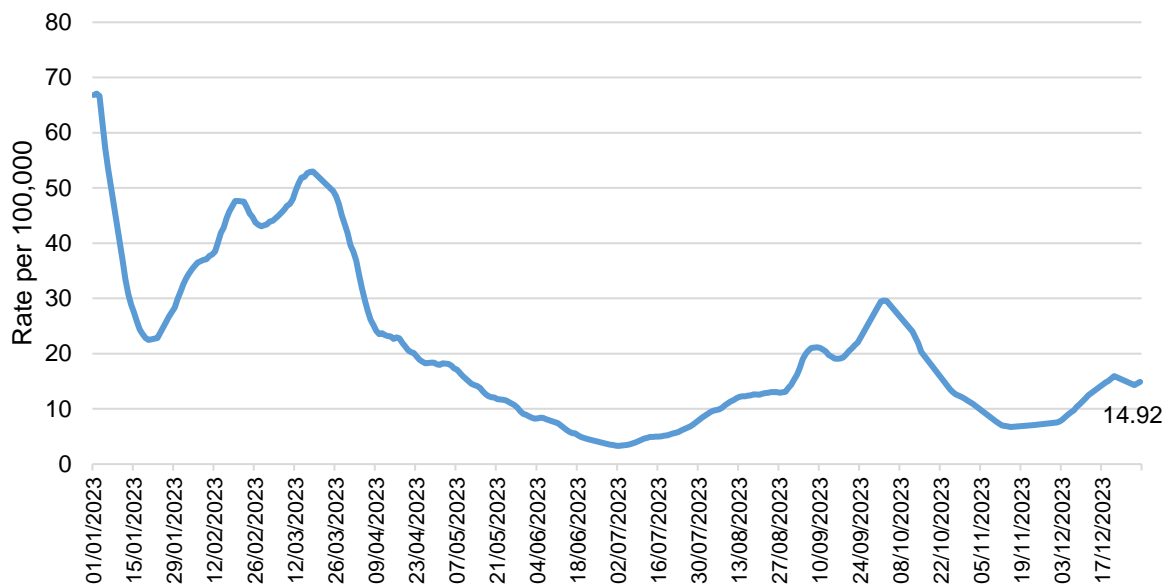
During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) conducted the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS); collecting and analysing millions of swab samples and blood tests to estimate the levels of COVID-19 within the population. This winter the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has launched a new [Winter COVID-19 Infection Survey \(WCIS\)](#). Running from November 2023 to March 2024, the WCIS provides key insight into levels of COVID-19 circulating across the wider community, and assesses the potential for increased demand on health services due to changes in the way the virus is spreading, which could be driven by the arrival of any new variants. The latest ONS release from the WCIS, shows that in the week ending 10 January 1.9% of people in England tested positive, down from 2.7% in the preceding week (week ending 03 January). In London 2.0% of people tested positive in the week ending 10 January, a decrease from 2.7% the week prior. These estimates have not been adjusted for any biases in the sampling or the lower sensitivity of the lateral flow tests. Once UKHSA publishes further detailed outcomes of this survey, the results will be shared in a future version of this report.

### Weekly positivity rate in London and England 16 November to 10 January 2023



In March 2022, the Living with COVID strategy was introduced which removed the majority of pillar 2 testing (widespread drive/walk through testing and testing at home). Pillar 1 testing continued, with a focus on high risk settings, and staff working with patients who are at high risk from severe outcomes in NHS and hospice settings. Nationally there were 33,766 cases of COVID-19 throughout December, compared to 18,699 cases in November. The rate of cases per 100,000 people (in the rolling 7-day period) has increased from around 7.5 per 100,000 at the start of December to around 14.9% by the end of December. More information can be found from [UKHSA \(UK Health Security Agency\) at GOV.UK](#)

**Daily rate of pillar 1 COVID-19 cases in England 1 January 2023 to 24 January 2024**



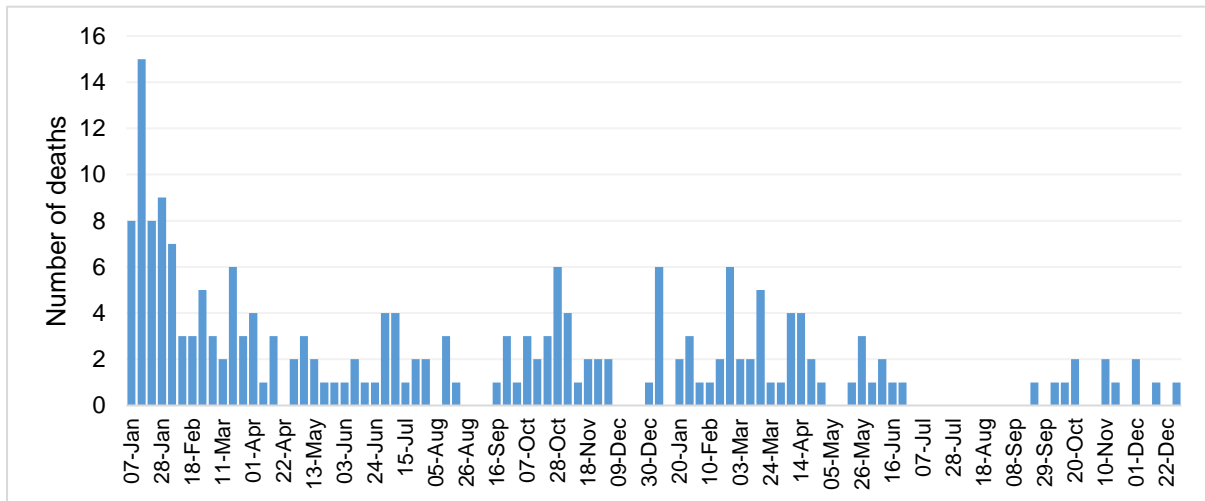
Latest data show there was 4,113 inpatients at NHS hospitals in England that have tested positive for COVID-19 as of 31 December, an increase from 2,313 at the end of the previous month (November).

**Number of daily COVID-19 inpatients at NHS hospitals 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2024**



[The Office for National Statistics](#) publishes information regarding the number of deaths with COVID-19. The latest data (for the week ending 29 December 2023) shows there was 1 COVID-19 related death in Havering in the preceding week. In total the number of deaths in Havering with COVID-19 so far is 1,194. Most COVID-19 related deaths occurred during the early waves of the pandemic and before vaccinations were made available. During 2023 there have been 64 deaths. For comparison, there were 142 deaths in 2022, 443 deaths for the period in 2021 and 545 deaths in 2020

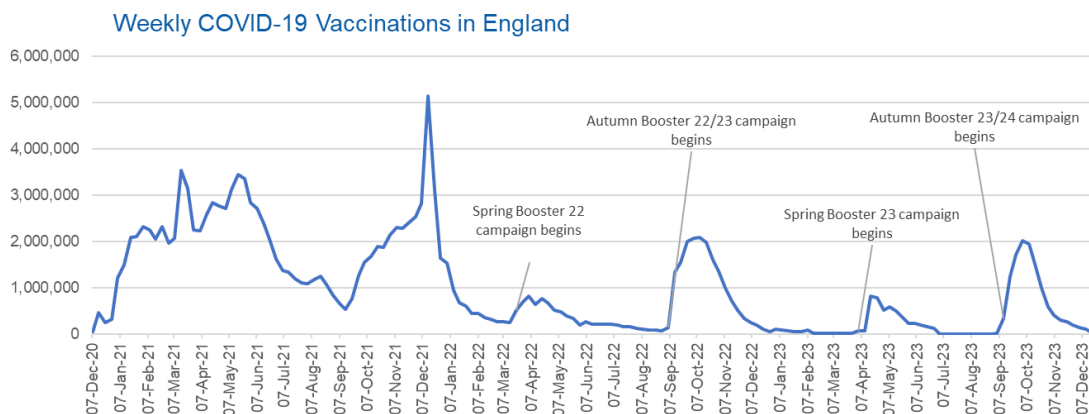
### Number of COVID-19 related deaths in Havering each week from 1 January to 29 December 2023



COVID-19 vaccination remains the most effective action to take to protect against COVID-19. The [NHS is offering](#) a seasonal COVID-19 vaccine for those aged 65 years old or over, at increased risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19, living in a care home, a frontline health or social care worker, a carer or living with someone with a weakened immune system. If you are eligible, the last date you will be able to get your seasonal COVID-19 vaccine is 31 January 2024. After this, in order to obtain a seasonal COVID-19 vaccine you will require a personal instruction from a doctor or other prescriber following an individual assessment.

Nationally, as of 01 January 2024, 11,784,022 autumn vaccinations have been delivered nationally, taking the total number of COVID-19 vaccinations delivered to 157,436,865. In London 1,020,373 autumn booster vaccinations have been given to date.

### Weekly COVID-19 Vaccinations in England 7 December 2020 to 31 December 2023

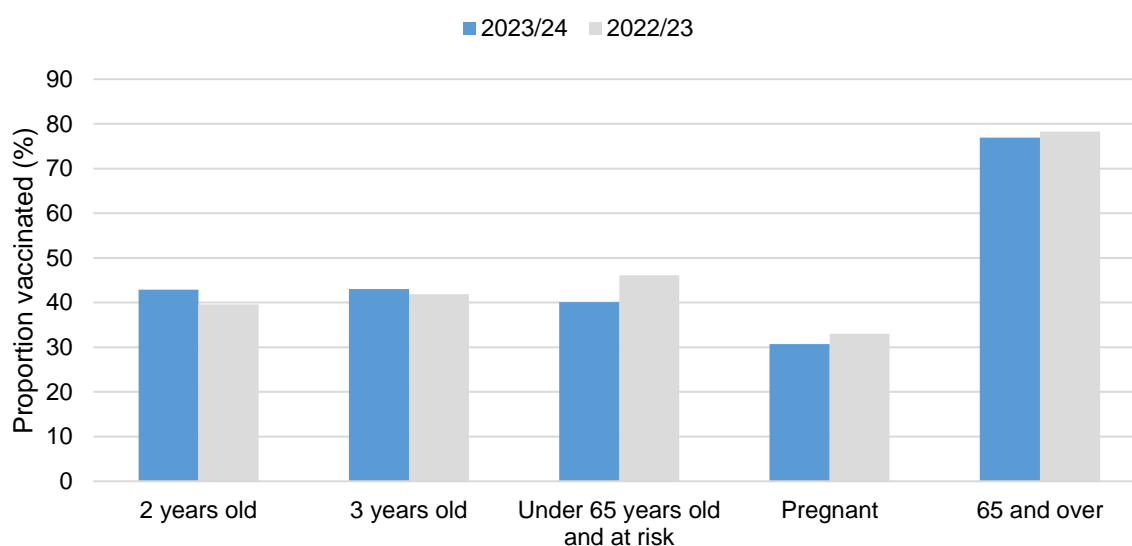


## Influenza (Flu)

Influenza, commonly known as flu, is a contagious respiratory illness that typically peaks during the winter months. Monitoring flu infections during this time is important as it can be more serious for older people and those who are vulnerable, and lead to increased hospital admissions. Understanding and tracking flu patterns are vital for effective preparedness, enabling timely interventions and public health measures to mitigate the impact on both individuals and healthcare systems. Detailed weekly analysis at national and regional level can be found at [UKHSA](#). Data are currently not available at local authority level.

Nationally, for the week of 18 December to 24 December 2023 the number of cases of flu increased (positivity rate of 11.2%) compared to the previous week (8.9%). The number of people visiting A&E for flu symptoms increased and was having a medium impact on hospitals. The number of people needing intensive care for flu also increased and was having low impact level on services. So far this flu season lower numbers of older people, pregnant women and those under 65 and at risk received their flu vaccination compared to same period last year. Higher numbers of 2 and 3 year olds have had their flu vaccine compared to same period last year.

### Provisional proportion of people in England who had received their flu vaccine as of 24 December



### Other winter viruses

In addition to COVID-19 and Influenza (flu), there are other viruses that are more common in winter. They can affect individuals of all ages, although they may cause more severe illness in children, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems. A snapshot of the national situation in the fortnight 18 December to 31 December 2023 is outlined in the table following. UKHSA produces detailed information on [norovirus and rotavirus](#) as well as [influenza and other respiratory viruses](#).

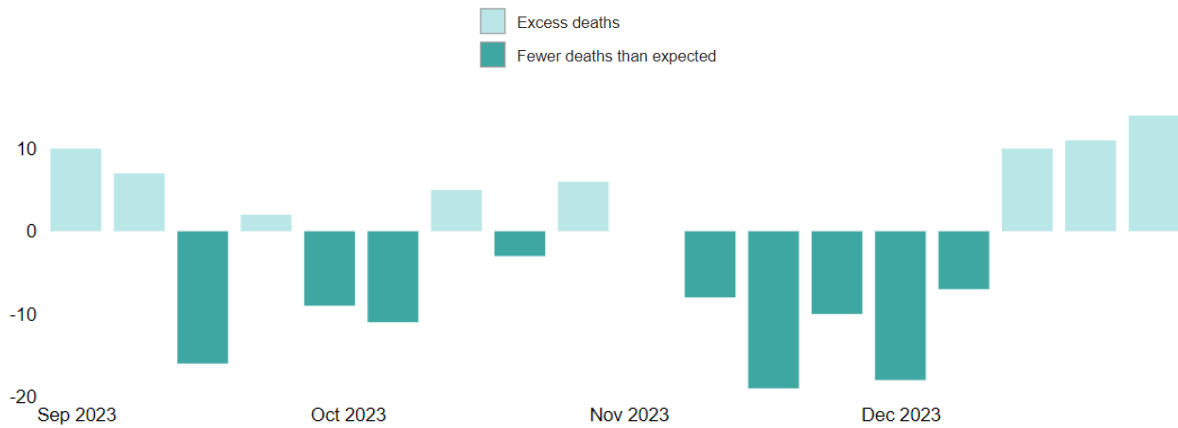
<b>Virus</b>	<b>Symptoms</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Adenovirus	Adenovirus is a group of common viruses that can cause various illnesses, such as, the common cold, sore throat, fever, acute bronchitis (inflammation of the airways of the lungs, sometimes called a "chest cold") and pink eye (conjunctivitis) amongst others.	<b>Positivity remained low at 1.9%</b> , with the highest positivity in children under 5 years old at 5.9%
Human metapneumovirus (hMPV)	hMPV is a respiratory virus, discovered in 2001, which typically induces symptoms akin to the common cold or flu and can result in more severe respiratory issues, particularly in vulnerable populations.	<b>Positivity increased to 4.6%</b> , with the highest positivity in children aged 5 and under at 10.9%.
Parainfluenza	Parainfluenza is a group of viruses causing respiratory infections, characterized by symptoms ranging from mild cold-like conditions to more severe respiratory issues such as croup or pneumonia.	<b>Positivity remained low at 2.2%</b> , with the highest positivity in children under 5 years old at 4.6%
Rhinovirus	Rhinovirus is a common cause of the common cold, leading to symptoms like runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, cough, and sometimes mild fever.	<b>Positivity decreased to 9.7%</b> overall, with the highest positivity in children under 5 years old at 19.7%.
Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)	RSV is a common respiratory virus that can lead to mild cold-like symptoms in adults and older children, but can cause more severe respiratory issues, especially bronchiolitis and pneumonia, in young children and infants.	<b>Positivity decreased to 5.8%</b> , with the highest positivity in those aged under 5 years old at 14.2%
Norovirus	Norovirus also called the "winter vomiting bug" is a highly contagious stomach bug known for causing diarrhoea, feeling sick (nausea) and being sick (vomiting). It can be very unpleasant, but usually goes away in about 2 days.	Norovirus activity remained high across all age groups during the last fortnight (18 December to 31 December 2023) and was <b>48% higher than the 5-season average</b> .
Rotavirus	Rotavirus is a highly contagious virus that primarily affects the digestive system, causing severe diarrhea and vomiting, particularly in infants and young children, and it's one of the leading causes of severe diarrhea worldwide.	Rotavirus activity has fluctuated in recent weeks and was <b>11% higher than the 5-season average</b> .

## Excess Deaths

Monitoring excess deaths during seasonal changes, particularly in winter, helps in understanding the impact of illnesses like COVID-19 and flu on mortality rates.

[The Office for Health Improvement and Disparity \(OHID\)](#) calculates that in Havering from 1 September to 29 December 2023 there have been no excess deaths, with 761 registered deaths against 797 expected deaths (of which 12 deaths were related to COVID-19).

### Weekly Excess Deaths in Havering 1 September to 29 December 2023



## Key Messages

It is important to continue to protect yourself, your family, and those around you against winter infections, and to be particularly vigilant to protect those who are more vulnerable of more severe illness.

### Some key protective actions

- If you are eligible and are able to access vaccination at this stage in the winter, get vaccinated – vaccinations give the best protection against flu and COVID-19
- If you are unwell, protect people who are more vulnerable from severe illness and do not visit hospitals or care homes
- As far as possible, limit contact with others if you are unwell.
- Check the NHS website (<https://www.nhs.uk/>) for advice on how to manage symptoms
- Remember that antibiotics do not kill viruses
- Maintain good hand hygiene through regular and thorough hand washing
- If hand wash facilities are not available, then use hand sanitizer for more protection from respiratory viruses, but remember than hand sanitizer will not protect against norovirus.
- Face coverings – consider wearing a face covering in enclosed or crowded spaces
- Let fresh air in if you are meeting up with friends and family indoors, or consider meeting up with family, friends outside
- Contact NHS 111 or your GP if symptoms worsen. If an emergency, dial 999.

### For more support

Flu vaccine: <http://www.nhs.uk/book-a-flu-vaccination>

Covid-19 vaccine: <http://www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination>

### Cost of living support

General information: <http://www.havering.gov.uk/costofliving>

Support with NHS costs: <http://www.northeastlondon.icb.nhs.uk/nhs-costs>

Warm hubs: <http://www.havering.gov.uk/warmspaces>

Food banks: <http://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help>

Information and advice for Long COVID: <https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/information-and-advice-on-long-covid/>

### Please note:

The data presented here are as shown on the specified website on the date given. They may be subject to amendment by NHS, UKHSA or ONS at a later date.

Contact [PHI@havering.gov.uk](mailto:PHI@havering.gov.uk) for further information and previous data.

Last Updated: 26 January 2023