

MAY 2026

# COMMUNITY UPDATE

**healthwatch**  
North Northamptonshire

## WHAT IS HEALTHWATCH?

Healthwatch is an independent organisation that listens to people's experiences of health and social care services. It helps ensure services are safe, effective, and meet local needs. Healthwatch collects feedback, provides information, and uses people's views to influence improvements in NHS and care services within the local community.



## HOW DOES HEALTHWATCH INFLUENCE CHANGE?

Healthwatch collects people's experiences through surveys, feedback forms, community events, and conversations with patients and carers. It also gathers views online and by phone. This information is analysed and shared with NHS organisations, local councils, and care providers. By highlighting trends and concerns, Healthwatch influences service improvements and helps decision-makers prioritise changes that reflect local needs.

## HOW CAN I SHARE MY EXPERIENCE?

You can share your experience with Healthwatch North Northamptonshire by speaking to their team directly, completing an online feedback form, or taking part in local engagement events and surveys. You can also email or phone them to describe your experience of NHS or social care services. All feedback is confidential and helps improve local health and care services.



# RESIDENT DOCTORS STRIKES: JUNE 15-19

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## WHAT ARE RESIDENT DOCTOR STRIKES AND WHY ARE THEY HAPPENING?

Resident doctors (also called junior doctors) are fully qualified doctors who are still in postgraduate training, working in hospitals across the UK. They play a key role in A&E, wards, and emergency care.

They go on strike to protest issues such as pay, long working hours, and staffing shortages. These strikes are organised by the British Medical Association.



## HOW DOES THIS IMPACT ME?

During strike action in the National Health Service, hospitals and GP services may have fewer doctors available than normal, which puts extra pressure on remaining staff and services. This can lead to longer waiting times, delayed treatments, and some non-urgent appointments or procedures being postponed or rescheduled.

However, emergency and life-threatening care is still prioritised and will always be treated as normal.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM UNWELL?

If you are unwell, it is important to choose the right level of care depending on how serious your symptoms are. For non-urgent illnesses or if you are unsure what to do, you should contact NHS 111 or speak to a pharmacist, as they can give advice and guide you to the right service.

If you have serious or life-threatening symptoms such as chest pain, severe breathing problems, or signs of a stroke, you should call 999 immediately or go to A&E.



# STAYING SAFE DURING HOT WEATHER

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## WHO IS AT MOST RISK?

Hot weather can affect anyone, but some people are more vulnerable to heat-related illness. Older adults, young children, people with long-term health conditions, and those living alone may struggle more in high temperatures. It's important to check in on family, friends, and neighbours during periods of hot weather to make sure they are keeping cool and drinking enough fluids.



## HOW CAN I STAY COOL AND AVOID HEAT EXHAUSTION?

Drink plenty of water throughout the day and avoid spending long periods in direct sunlight, especially between 11am and 3pm. Keeping curtains closed during the day, wearing loose light clothing, and staying in shaded or cooler areas can also help prevent overheating. If you feel dizzy, tired, or unwell in the heat, move somewhere cool and rest.

## WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

Heat exhaustion can cause symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, excessive sweating, nausea, or feeling faint. If symptoms worsen or someone becomes confused, stops sweating, or collapses, it may be heatstroke, which is a medical emergency. Seek urgent medical help if this happens.

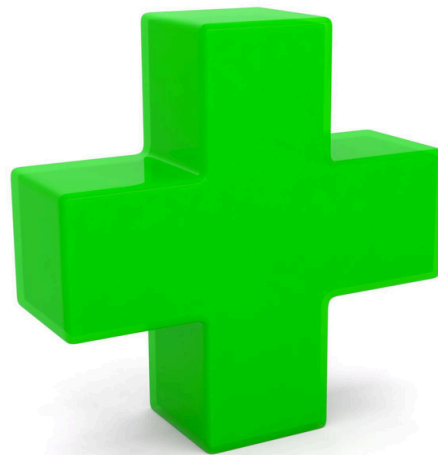
### 6 SIGNS OF HEAT STROKE



# SERVICE SPOTLIGHT: PHARMACY FIRST

## WHAT IS PHARMACY FIRST?

Pharmacy First is an NHS service that allows patients to receive advice and treatment for common health conditions directly from a community pharmacy, without needing a GP appointment. It helps people access care more quickly and supports GP practices by treating minor illnesses in the community.

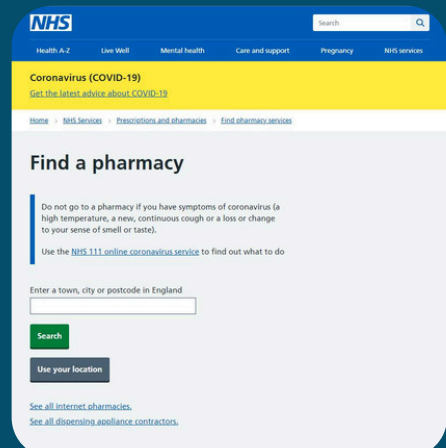


## WHAT HEALTH CONDITIONS CAN I ATTEND THE PHARMACY FOR?

Pharmacists can assess and treat a range of common conditions including sore throats, earache, sinusitis, shingles, infected insect bites, impetigo, and some urinary tract infections (UTIs). They can also provide advice and support for minor illnesses such as coughs, colds, hay fever, and aches and pains.

## HOW DO I KNOW WHICH PHARMACIES CAN OFFER THIS?

Most community pharmacies now provide the Pharmacy First service, making it easier to access healthcare locally. Patients can check the [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk), contact their local pharmacy directly, or ask their GP practice or NHS 111 to find participating pharmacies nearby.



# WOMEN'S HEALTH SPOTLIGHT: BREAST CANCER

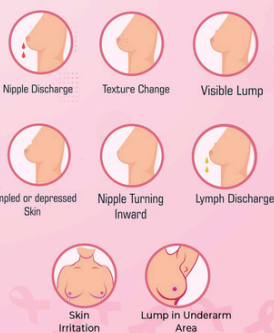
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## WHAT IS BREAST CANCER?

Breast cancer develops when abnormal cells in the breast grow uncontrollably and form a tumour. It is one of the most common cancers in the UK and can affect people of all ages, although it is more common in women over 50. Detecting breast cancer early can improve treatment options and outcomes significantly.



## Breast Cancer Symptoms



## WHAT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS SHOULD I BE AWARE OF?

Common signs of breast cancer can include a lump or swelling in the breast or armpit, changes in the shape or size of the breast, skin dimpling, nipple discharge, or a rash around the nipple area. It is important to regularly check your breasts and become familiar with what is normal for you so that any unusual changes can be identified early.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE A CONCERN?

If you notice any unusual changes to your breasts, contact your GP practice as soon as possible for advice and assessment. Most breast changes are not cancer, but it is important to get symptoms checked promptly. Early diagnosis can provide reassurance or help ensure treatment begins as quickly as possible if needed.



Read our article on Understanding Breast Cancer

here:



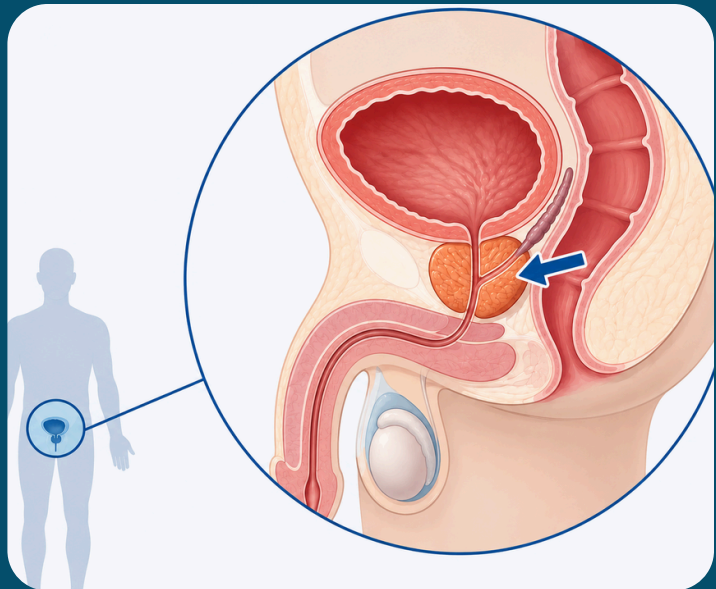
<https://www.healthwatchnn.org.uk>

# MEN'S HEALTH SPOTLIGHT: PROSTATE CANCER

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## WHAT IS PROSTATE CANCER?

Prostate cancer develops when abnormal cells grow in the prostate gland, a small gland found in men that helps produce semen. It is one of the most common cancers in men in the UK, particularly in those over the age of 50. Detecting prostate cancer early can improve treatment options and outcomes.



### Symptoms of Prostate Cancer



## WHAT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS SHOULD I BE AWARE OF?

Symptoms of prostate cancer can include needing to urinate more often, difficulty starting or stopping urination, a weak flow, or feeling that the bladder has not fully emptied. Some people may also notice blood in their urine or semen, or discomfort in the lower back or pelvic area. It is important to be aware of what is normal for you and speak to a healthcare professional about any unusual changes.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE A CONCERN?

If you notice any unusual urinary symptoms or changes that concern you, contact your GP practice for advice and assessment. Most symptoms are not caused by cancer, but it is important to get them checked. Early assessment can provide reassurance or help ensure treatment begins quickly if needed.



Read our article on Understanding Prostate  
Cancer here:



<https://www.healthwatchnn.org.uk>

# SUPPORT FOR CARERS

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## WHAT IS A CARER?

A carer is someone who provides unpaid support to a family member, friend, or neighbour who could not manage without help due to illness, disability, mental health needs, or age-related frailty. Many people do not realise they are carers because they are simply helping someone they care about.



## WHAT HELP CAN A CARER GET?

Carers in North Northamptonshire may be able to access wellbeing support, carers groups, respite services, emergency planning, and advice around finances and benefits. Support is available even if the person you care for does not receive social care services. Northamptonshire Carers also provides information, guidance, and local support for unpaid carers across the county.

## HOW DO I GET A CARER'S ASSESSMENT?

Under the Care Act 2014, unpaid carers are entitled to a free Carer's Assessment to discuss how caring affects their daily life, health, and wellbeing. In North Northamptonshire, assessments are provided by Northamptonshire Carers on behalf of North Northamptonshire Council. To speak to Northamptonshire Carers or request a Carer's Assessment, call 01933 677907.



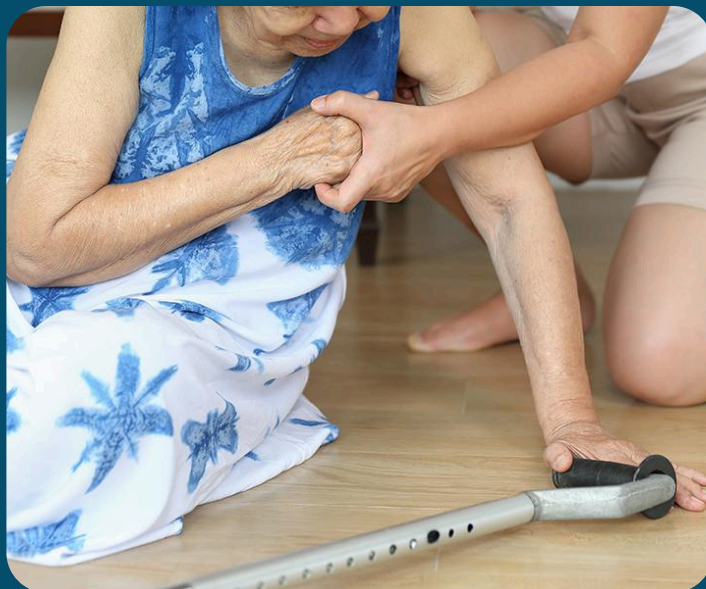
**Northamptonshire Carers**  
Supporting Unpaid Carers

# PREVENTING FALLS AND STAYING INDEPENDENT

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## WHY FALLS PREVENTION MATTERS

Falls are one of the most common causes of injury and loss of independence in older adults. Around one in three people aged over 65 experiences a fall each year, which can have a significant impact on confidence, mobility, and wellbeing. Taking simple steps to reduce the risk of falls can help people remain safe, active, and independent for longer.



## STAY ACTIVE AND MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER

Regular movement and gentle exercise can help improve strength, balance, and coordination, all of which can reduce the likelihood of falling. Simple changes around the home, such as improving lighting, removing loose rugs or trip hazards, and installing handrails or grab rails, can also make a big difference in helping people stay safe at home.

## FALLS ASSESSMENTS AND SUPPORT

North Northamptonshire Council's Falls Management Service provides specialist assessment and advice for people who are worried about falling or who have recently had a fall. The service can offer practical guidance, exercises, and support to help people improve confidence and remain independent. To speak to the service or find out more, call 0300 126 3000 or you can complete the online form [here](#).



# VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION WEEK

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## SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

Our volunteers have supported Community Health Check Events in Kettering, Corby, Wellingborough, and Rushden, helping us reach hundreds of residents across North Northamptonshire. Their support has helped connect people, including some of the most vulnerable in our communities, with important health information, advice, and wellbeing support.



## DEDICATED TO HELPING OTHERS

Our volunteers give their time because they genuinely care about helping local people access the best possible advice, information, and support around Health and Social Care. Every volunteer brings their own unique skills, experiences, and personality, all of which play an invaluable role in helping Healthwatch North Northamptonshire engage with communities and ensure local voices are heard.

## A SPECIAL THANK YOU

During Volunteer Appreciation Week, we would like to say a heartfelt thank you to all of our volunteers for their dedication, commitment, and continued support. Whether supporting at community events, speaking with residents, or helping raise awareness of local services, your contribution makes a real difference every day. Healthwatch North Northamptonshire could not reach as many people without the passion, kindness, and hard work of our volunteers.



To find out more or apply for any of these volunteering roles, please email [Claire.Neilson@healthwatchnn.org.uk](mailto:Claire.Neilson@healthwatchnn.org.uk)

# VOLUNTEER WITH HEALTHWATCH

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## ENTER & VIEW VOLUNTEERS

Enter & View Volunteers visit health and social care services to hear people's experiences first-hand. This may include hospitals, GP practices, or care homes. They use interviews, observations, and informal conversations to understand what is working well and what could be improved. Findings are used to influence change and ensure services better meet the needs of patients, staff, and the wider community.



## COMMUNITY LISTENER VOLUNTEER

Community Listener Volunteers support local people by helping them understand and navigate health and social care services. They are friendly, approachable, and skilled at listening, offering guidance to help people find the right information or service. This role plays an important part in reducing confusion and ensuring people feel supported when accessing care.

## VOLUNTEER RESEARCHER

Volunteer Researchers support the collection and analysis of public feedback on health and social care services. This may include helping design surveys, supporting focus groups, gathering data, and contributing to reports. Working alongside staff, they help ensure local voices are heard and used to improve services across North Northamptonshire.



To find out more or apply for any of these volunteering roles, please email [Claire.Neilson@healthwatchnn.org.uk](mailto:Claire.Neilson@healthwatchnn.org.uk)

# UPCOMING EVENT: HEALTH MELA JUNE 6TH 2026

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## A COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING EVENT

The Wellingborough Health Mela 2026 will take place on Saturday 6th June from 11am to 3pm at the Highfield Community Centre in Wellingborough. Organised by the Wellingborough District Hindu Association (WDHA), the event brings together health professionals, wellbeing services, community organisations, and local residents for a day focused on health, wellbeing, and community connection.



## HEALTH INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Visitors will have the opportunity to speak with local health, social care, and wellbeing organisations to access information, advice, and support. The Health Mela aims to help people learn more about staying healthy, preventing illness, and accessing local services. Healthwatch North Northamptonshire will also be attending to provide advice, information, and listen to people's experiences of health and social care services.

## BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

The Health Mela is designed for people of all ages and backgrounds and reflects WDHA's ongoing commitment to supporting the wider community across Northamptonshire. The event encourages people to connect with local services, ask questions about their health, and discover activities and support available in the local area. Entry is free and everyone is welcome to attend.



Check what events we have going on in North Northamptonshire by visiting our events page:



<https://www.healthwatchnn.org.uk>