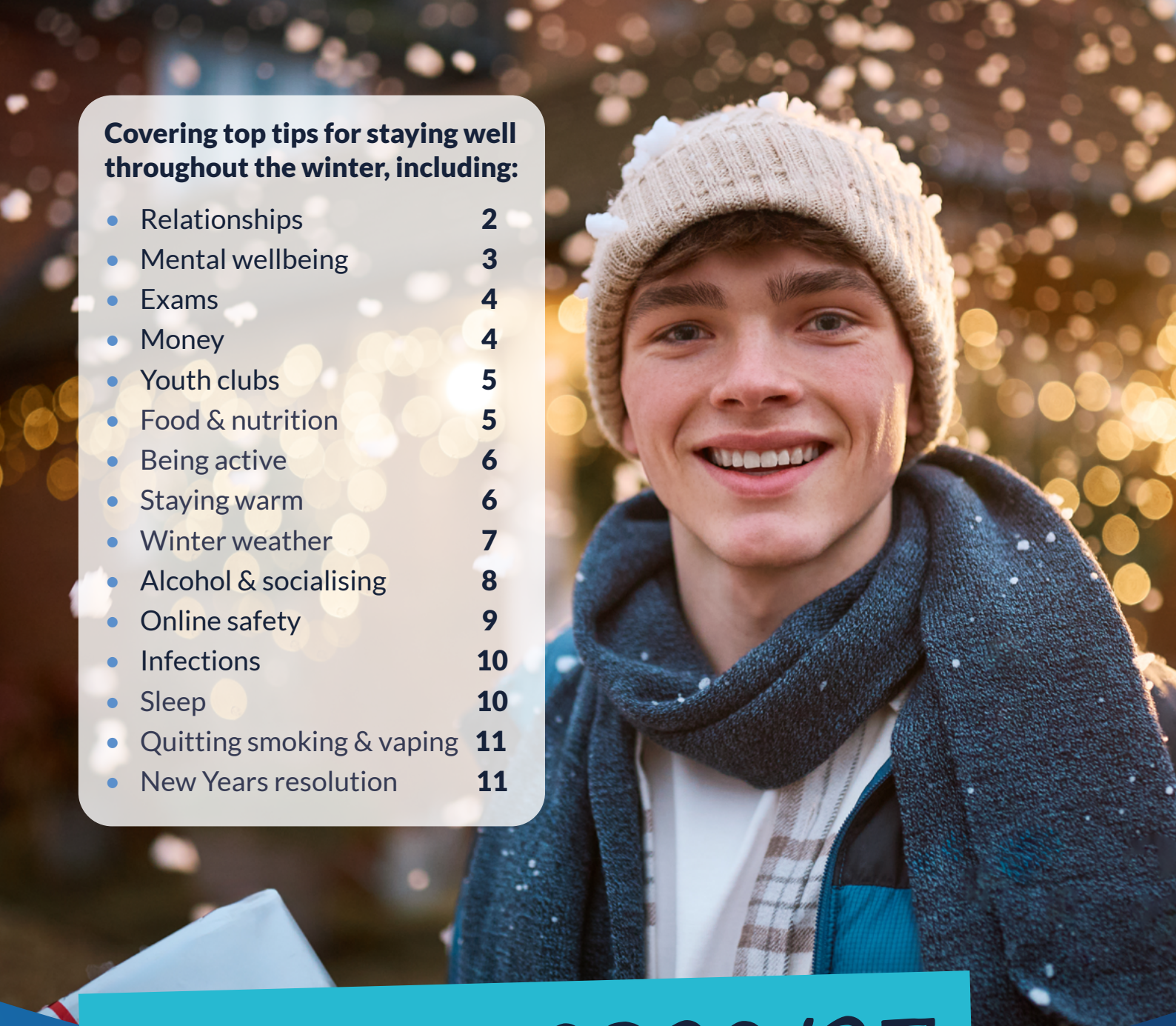

Covering top tips for staying well throughout the winter, including:

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WINTER 2026/27

A teenager guide to:

Staying Well in Winter

worcestershire.gov.uk

worcestershire county council

You are probably ready for the winter holiday, a deserved break from the long autumn term and a time for you to switch off from school. This booklet contains some suggestions for staying safe and healthy through the holidays and into the colder winter months whilst still having fun.

If you need access to the internet to use the links, please visit your local library who will be happy to help you do this.

If you have special educational needs or a disability find out more about support that is available here:

SENDIASS guidance for young people Worcestershire County Council

RELATIONSHIPS

The winter holiday period often brings families together. This can be lots of fun but also bring stress and conflict. You might have to choose which members of your family to spend time with which can be hard.



If you need someone to talk to about arguments or worries at home, here are a few organisations who can listen and offer help.

Childline

YoungMinds

Also check out the **Mental Wellbeing section on page 3**.

Mental Wellbeing

While the holidays can be fun and full of excitement, they can also feel overwhelming. There's often a lot going on with high expectations, family pressures, and even comparisons with friends that can make things feel heavier than usual. If things aren't feeling as joyful as they "should," you're not alone.

Sometimes, the reality of this season doesn't match the hype, and that's okay.

If you've noticed changes in your mood lately, like:

- Trouble sleeping or feeling tired all the time
- Avoiding friends or not wanting to hang out
- Losing interest in things you usually enjoy
- Not looking after yourself like you used to, such as skipping meals, showers, or hurting yourself

Please know that these are signs that you might be struggling, and it's not your fault. You deserve support, and there are people who care and want to help, whether that's parents or carers, friend, a trusted adult, or a professional.

You're not alone in this. Talking about it can be the first step toward feeling better.

Places where you can get help are:

- **School health nurse service**
- **ChatHealth**
- **Melo (Onside, Worcestershire & Herefordshire)**
- **KOOTH**
- **SHOUT**

You can also find out more about how teenagers' brains develop via this free online course:

Online Learning
(Password: PARENTSROCK)

Some people can feel low when the days get shorter. Simple tips to help overcome this are:

- Get outside and into the daylight **early in the day**
- Sit near a window
- Try to get out whenever the sun is shining
- Use local parks for a walk or jog as this can help boost mood and happy hormones

You can access more tips and advice on staying well and how to cope if you're struggling or having suicidal thoughts **here**.



Exams

You might have mock exams coming up which can be stressful. Stress can be reduced by:

- Trying out different revision methods to find the right approach that works for you.
- Starting revision early, little and often; this can help you feel more prepared.
- Writing out positive thoughts about yourself.
- Practising deep breathing.

Visit YoungMinds to learn more about coping with exam stress:

YoungMinds

There are various services where you can get confidential support (see **page 3, Mental Wellbeing**).

Money

Managing money through the winter months can be tricky. Focussing on the experience of celebrations and creating lasting memories can be as valuable as giving and receiving big expensive gifts.

You can't apply for a loan in the UK if you're under 18. If you think you may be a victim of a loan shark (someone who lends money to others illegally) contact Stop Loan Sharks to get support – you won't get in trouble:

Stop Loan Sharks



Youth Clubs

Youth clubs are open over the winter months offering a warm and welcoming place to socialise.

Find your local youth club here:

Youth Clubs Worcestershire County Council



Food and nutrition

The winter holidays are often a time to meet with family and friends to enjoy meals together. Try to choose healthier seasonal foods and make high sugary fatty and salty foods a treat that lasts over a few days. Try to avoid energy drinks and caffeine which can interfere with your sleep.

In the winter months everyone in the UK needs extra Vitamin D; 10ug (microgrammes) each day from October until April, to keep your bones strong and prevent infections. Ask your parents or carers to purchase some supplements. Foods high in **vitamin D** are: egg yolks, oily fish (including tinned), foods fortified with vitamin D like some spreads and breakfast cereals.

In the New Year people often change what they eat to be healthier. It's important to keep a balanced diet. Find out about healthy eating **here**.



Being active

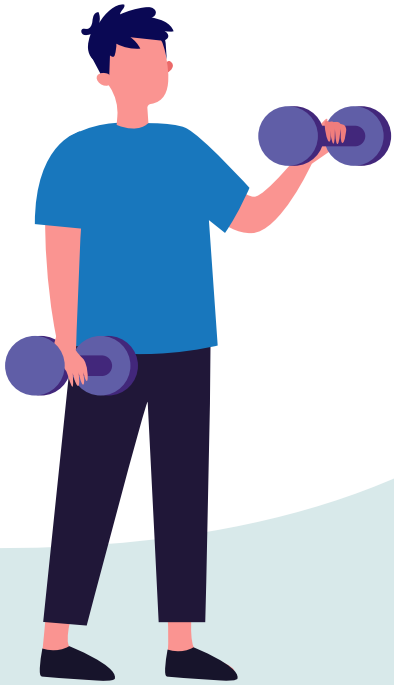
Being active outside in the winter months can boost your mood. If you get out early in the day it can help you get better sleep, and we all love our sleep!

Try to have an average of at least an hour of moderate or vigorous exercise a day (football, running, swimming, cycling, dancing) – remember you don't have to do it all in one go. Aim to do muscle and bone strengthening activity twice a week (gymnastics, martial arts, jumping activities e.g. netball, basketball, dancing also small sided team games e.g. 5-a-side football). Most importantly, find activities you enjoy and build up gradually.

Doing **regular** muscle and bone strengthening activities **as a teenager** is the best time to make a big difference to your bone health for the **rest of your life**.

Find activities here:

Activity Finder Active Herefordshire & Worcestershire



Staying warm

The key to staying warm in winter is to wear lots of layers and when outside wear a hat and gloves.

A hot water bottle or wheat bag doesn't just have to be for bed! Use them to stay warm indoors in the day if you're feeling chilly. If you're looking for a warm place to go to outside your home, there are community centres, leisure centres and many other places offering a warm welcome to people of all ages across Worcestershire over the winter.

Use the map on the webpage below to find out what's open near you.

Warm welcome spaces map



Winter weather

Frozen ponds and lakes might look like the perfect spot for fun or to snap a pic, but don't be fooled, icy water is likely to be unsafe to walk on. Stay off the ice. If you fall in, freezing water can send your body into shock, fast.

If a friend falls through, don't rush onto the ice after them, that's very risky. Call 999 straight away and from the edge throw them a life buoy or something that floats. Stay safe, be smart.

Water Safety Near Frozen Water
Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK)

Sledging

Snow can be lots of fun and a great way to get active. Wrap up warm, wear a helmet and check out trees, fences and random junk before you launch yourself downhill. A hidden obstacle can turn fun into a dangerous wipeout instantly.

Cycling after dark?

- If you're riding after dark, lights on the front and back of your bike aren't just the smart option, they're the law.
- No lights = no visibility = high risk.
- Opt for reflective or light-coloured clothing to increase your chances of being seen.
- Check your helmet fits snugly under your chin and sits no more than 2 finger widths above your eyebrows.



Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol can reduce self-control and increase risky behaviours. This can cause accidents, arguments and unwanted sexual behaviours.

If you have any concerns about your (or someone else's) use of alcohol or drugs you can get free confidential support from the Here4YOUth service:

Worcestershire Here4YOUth Cranstoun

Drugs can be addictive, so it is best never to try any. Be confident in your decision to avoid drugs as it is not possible to know what deadly chemicals have been added to illegal drugs. To find out more visit FRANK:

FRANK



Socialising

The winter holidays can involve a lot of socialising which can be great fun but also create anxiety and pressures.

To have a great time without any regrets decide on your own limits.

Although social media is a great way to stay in touch with friends, many young people agree that it can start to take over their lives. Where you can, meet friends you know in person and set screen time limits.

Take some time for yourself and make sure you rest and recharge.



Online Safety

This toolkit is written by Gen Z for Gen A. It covers everything from sexting to doomscrolling and can help you build the skills to handle the digital world in a smart, safe, and positive way.

Not everyone online is a friend. If you are chatting to someone you have never met in person be very cautious of **any** requests. If you have any concerns, report them to the gaming or social media platform, tell your parents or carers and **never** send any photos, whoever is asking.

Never meet up with anyone who you don't already know in person or have only met online, they may not be who they seem to be. Maintain a level of privacy.

You can find out more here:

Help & advice
Childnet

Be aware that some online gaming can include gambling. If you feel you are spending more money than you have, talk to someone. You can also find support here:

Find help
Ygam

Online searches around self-harm and suicide can be harmful. Download the free R;pple tool to help you stay safe.

R;pple: Crisis Intervention Suicide Prevention and Mental Health

The internet can lead to some worrying information and points of view. If you have concerns about hate speech or extreme views online, find out what you can do to tackle it **here**.





Infections

Winter's the season for sniffles — colds, flu, and other bugs like RSV and norovirus tend to spread more.

One of the easiest ways to dodge them? **Wash and dry your hands properly** and keep up to date with vaccinations.

If you're offered the flu nasal spray, go for it — it not only protects you but also helps keep your grandparents and other vulnerable family members safe from getting seriously ill.

Flu, COVID-19 & Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Worcestershire County Council

Free NHS MenB vaccine

Starting uni or college? If you think you might be going to university and are in Year 13, the free NHS MenB vaccine helps protect against a serious infection that can cause meningitis and sepsis. Get your first dose before the end of December. The second dose must be given before the end of March.

Tell your friends about this important vaccination which is only available free this year for Year 13s or those in their first year of university.



Sleep

The winter holiday is usually only two weeks. Plan to maintain a regular sleep pattern so getting up for school is not too difficult in January. Avoid using your phone into the early hours and enjoy your sleep. Agree a phone curfew with friends. You will need 8 to 10 hours sleep each night. It is best to avoid napping during the day, especially after 6pm.

Try these links for some advice:

Teen Sleep Hub

Sleep Problems YoungMinds



Quitting smoking & vaping

Very few teenagers smoke. If you are aged 12-17, smoke, and are worried about your smoking or want to quit you can get free specialist NHS support to quit by contacting the Smoke Free Homes service.

From 1st January 2027, anyone aged 17 or under, will never be able to purchase tobacco at any age, so now is a good time to quit. Nicotine in cigarettes and vapes can have negative effects on your brain, increase asthma symptoms and impact mental wellbeing and sleep.

Quit Smoking

Vaping

New Year resolutions

Use this as an opportunity to plan for positive changes and new experiences such as healthier eating, more exercise and face to face activities and quality time with people important to you.

If you find it hard to stick to a resolution, don't worry. You can make changes at any time of the year.

All through the year you can contact your School Health Nurse with any questions or concerns.

Text to ChatHealth on 07507331750 to speak to a School Health Nurse in confidence. They will offer confidential advice and support. The service is available between 9:00am - 5:00pm, Monday - Friday:

ChatHealth

