People in Ayrshire and Arran are being encouraged to get Healthwise today (November 26th) with the official return of Dr Owl.

Along with Shona Robison MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, NHS 24’s John McAnaw and schoolchildren Hannah and Struan, Dr Owl launched the 'Be Healthwise This Winter' campaign to encourage us all to look after our health this winter.

Managed by NHS 24, the 'Be Healthwise This Winter' campaign is designed to raise awareness of the simple steps we can all take to manage winter illnesses and advising what to do if we do fall ill. As well as helping to keep us healthy and well, the campaign also aims to reduce pressure on our vital NHS services during the very busy winter months by helping people make the right choice about where best to take their health needs this winter.

John McAnaw, NHS 24’s Head of Pharmacy, said:

"Dr Owl was a real hit last year but he does have a serious message to deliver. Winter poses some real health challenges for everyone and it’s important to be familiar with different opening hours at many local pharmacies and GP surgeries. That is why people who need repeat prescriptions should check they have enough for the holidays and order what they need in plenty of time. If for any reason there is no access to repeat medicines then a pharmacist should also be able to help with this.

"Winter is the time for coughs, colds, flu, and tummy bugs and a lot of the symptoms can be managed at home. To do this, it's important to stock up on over the counter medicines such as paracetamol, ibuprofen and rehydration salts. Your pharmacist can advise on what’s appropriate for adults and children. Anyone who is concerned about symptoms and doesn't feel they can wait until their GP surgery or pharmacy re-opens, can call NHS 24 on 111. And there’s excellent health information about common conditions available online at www.nhsinform.co.uk.

"For some people the festive holidays bring added pressure which can cause anxiety and stress, all of which can take its toll on our mental wellbeing. The Breathing Space service can be contacted on 0800 83 85 87 to support people suffering low mood or anxiety."

The Be Healthwise campaign is part of the wider NHS Scotland winter health planning announced by Shona Robison MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing. Ms Robison says the #healthwise campaign is an important part of the planning. She said:
"The Be Healthwise campaign featuring Dr Owl is a really good way of reminding us how we can do our bit to look after our own and our family’s health and in doing so preserve our front line services for those in most clinical need. It's also worth reminding people about the excellent range of services provided by our community pharmacies. People who run out of their usual medicines or dressings can speak to a pharmacist about an urgent supply rather than walking into their local Emergency Department.

“As we prepare to head into winter we have been working closely with health boards and stakeholders to put measures in place. This includes our winter guidance for boards, which was issued two months earlier this year than previous years, and additional investment of £10.7 million which will help ease pressure.

“The Dr Owl campaign is another aspect of winter planning which will help raise awareness about what we can all do to look after ourselves and access the right service for when we need it.”

Liz Moore, Director for Acute Services, NHS Ayrshire & Arran added:

“The best way not to be caught out by winter weather is to plan appropriately. We want everyone in Ayrshire and Arran to have a great time this festive season and that means following Dr Owl’s great advice. Stocking up on over the counter remedies for common complaints, ensuring you order what you need for your repeat prescription and making sure you know where to turn if you do need help by checking what facilities are open and when.”

Dr Owl will be delivering his messages across radio, television and newspapers, as well as Facebook and twitter (@NHS24 #healthwise) throughout December. You can join in the conversation and share your own top tips via #healthwise.

For more information visit the winter health zone at www.nhsinform.co.uk.

ENDS

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