It might be the start of meteorological spring but winter still has its icy grip on Cambridgeshire with another cold snap on its way over the next few days.

With much colder temperatures forecast than of late from early Saturday onwards, snow showers and overnight temperatures falling below freezing, a Level 3 Cold Weather Alert has been triggered in Cambridgeshire from 9pm tonight (March 16) to 9am Tuesday (March 20).

Along with the Met Office also issuing a yellow warning for snow and ice in the county over the weekend, health experts are urging people to look out for others, to keep warm indoors and to take care when out and about.

Severe cold weather can be dangerous, especially for the very young or very old or those with chronic disease.

Val Thomas, Consultant in Public Health at Cambridgeshire County Council, said: “Although winter weather and snow can be fun for some, these weather conditions are also associated with an increase in illness and injuries. Cold weather increases the risk of heart attacks, strokes, lung illnesses, flu and other diseases. Snow and ice can also lead to people slipping and falling which can lead to serious injuries. Older people, very young children and people with serious medical conditions are particularly vulnerable to the effects of cold weather.

“We are asking everyone to remember the needs of friends, relatives and neighbours who could be at risk during this period of severe cold weather. Make sure they know what to do to stay warm and are well stocked with food and medications. If you, or they, are eligible for a flu vaccination make sure you get it as soon as you can.

“We wear a few layers of thin clothing rather than one thick layer when out and about, and when you need to go outside wear shoes with slip resistant, good grip soles. If indoors wear suitable clothing and it is important to keep the temperature in your home at 18 °C to ensure that you reduce any risks from the cold to your health.”

The Stay Well This Winter campaign can help you and your family prepare for winter. For more information, visit nhs.uk/staywell.

Top tips to keep warm during cold weather:

Keep your home warm, efficiently and safely:
heating your home to at least 18°C in winter poses minimal risk to your health when you are wearing suitable clothing

get your heating system and cooking appliances checked and keep your home well ventilated

use your electric blanket as instructed and get it tested every three years. Never use a hot water bottle with an electric blanket

do not use a gas cooker or oven to heat your home; it is inefficient and there is a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and this can kill

make sure you have a supply of heating oil or LPG or sold fuel if you are not on mains gas or electricity – to make sure you do not run out in winter

Keep in the warmth by:

fitting draught proofing to seal any gaps around windows and doors

making sure you have loft insulation. And if you have cavity walls, make sure they are insulated too

insulate your hot water cylinder and pipes

draw your curtains at dusk to help keep heat generated inside your rooms

make sure your radiators are not obstructed by furniture or curtains

Look after yourself:

food is a vital source of energy and helps to keep your body warm so have plenty of hot food and drinks

aim to include five daily portions of fruit and vegetables. Tinned and frozen vegetables count toward your five a day

stock up on tinned and frozen foods so you don't have to go out too much when it's cold or icy

exercise is good for you all year round and it can keep you warm in winter

if possible, try to move around at least once an hour. But remember to speak to your GP before starting any exercise
wear lots of thin layers – clothes made from cotton, wool or fleecy fibres are particularly good and maintain body heat

wear good-fitting slippers with a good grip indoors and shoes with a good grip outside to prevent trips, slips and falls

Make sure rubber tips on the end of sticks have a good tread – when they wear smooth they can skid on wet surfaces and should be replaced.

make sure you have spare medication in case you are unable to go out

Check if you are eligible for inclusion on the priority services register operated by your water and power supplier.

Look after others:

check on older neighbours or relatives, especially those living alone or who have serious illnesses to make sure they are safe, warm and well