

Winter wrapped up

Winter and the cold weather it brings are a source of worry for many older people

Preparing for winter and then following some simple suggestions can go a long way to making sure that you are as safe and comfortable as possible



This leaflet explains what you can do to get yourself and your home ready for winter, how to beat the cold and where to go for further information and support



Staying healthy

Looking after yourself is particularly important in winter. If your general health is good, you will be better prepared to deal with the cold.

- **Stay active.** As the weather gets colder it can be tempting to spend a lot of time sitting down. **Physical activity generates heat**, helping you to keep warm, and can generally increase your fitness. It can include routine activities like household chores. Outdoor activities are also good, but be careful if conditions are wet and icy.
- **Give up smoking.** It is always a good idea to give up smoking, but **in winter the risk of respiratory illness is increased**. Not smoking also saves money that you can put towards making yourself more comfortable in other ways.
- **Have a flu jab.** **Flu can be a serious health risk**, particularly if you are an older person, have a heart, respiratory or other serious health condition, or have lowered immunity resulting from a health condition or its treatment. People in these groups (including older people over 65) are recommended to have a flu jab, which is provided for free. Contact your GP practice for further details.



Eating properly

Eating properly is also particularly important in winter. You need fuel to keep warm, just as a fire does.

- **Eat at least one hot meal a day. Try to include a good range of foods in your diet:** bread, rice and potatoes; meat, fish and beans; dairy foods; and fresh fruit and vegetables all play an important role in keeping you healthy. Stock up on food in case the weather makes it difficult to get to the shops.
- **Drink hot drinks through the day** – it is another useful way of keeping warm. **Have a hot drink at bedtime.** You can also keep a flask by your bed in case you wake up feeling cold.

Keeping yourself warm

- **Wear suitable clothing. Several thin layers of clothing will keep you warmer than one thick layer** – this is because the layers trap warm air. Clothes made from wool, cotton and fleecy synthetic fibres are a good choice for warmth. Start with thermal underwear and warm tights and socks.
- **When you are sitting down indoors, a shawl or blanket can be a useful extra layer.** Outdoors, wear warm layers under your coat together with gloves and a coat and hat. **Remember it may feel colder when you have been out for a while than when you first step outside.** Wear warm shoes or boots, with good grips to reduce the risk of falling.
- **Wear warm clothes to bed as well.** As well as warm pyjamas or nightdress, wear thermal underwear and, if it is very cold, a hat and scarf. Use a hot-water bottle or electric blanket to warm the bed (but not both, as this is unsafe).



Keeping your home warm

For most of us, the home is where we spend the most time. It is important then that it should be safe and comfortable.

- **In winter the recommended temperature for rooms is 21°C (70°F).** You may prefer a higher temperature though.
- **Try to maintain the recommended temperature in all the rooms you use.** If this is not possible, keep your main living room warm and warm your bedroom and bed before you retire for the evening.
- **Get to know how the timer and thermostat on your heating system work** to get the most effective results. It may be better to set the timer to come on earlier rather than to have the thermostat set higher.
- **Keep your bedroom window closed at night.** The coldest part of the day will often be while you are asleep.
- **Put guards on all open fires** and be careful not to hang washing too close to the fire.
- **Be careful not to sit too close to direct sources of heat** such as gas, electric or open fires.



Help with heating your home

Heating your home is easier and cheaper if the property is insulated and your central heating system works properly.

- **Check your heating system works properly and have it serviced once a year.** Also, make sure that you can work the controls and know the setting to get the level of heat you want.
- If possible, **draught-proof doors and windows, insulate the loft and lag the hot-water tank and pipes** – these improvements can help to keep your house warmer. You may be able to get financial help with the cost of these improvements.
- **The Warm Front scheme offers grants for heating and insulation.** The grant can be awarded to cover a range of energy-efficiency and heating improvements to the home. Homeowners and private tenants aged over 60 can apply but eligibility is means-tested. If you do not qualify for a grant, you may qualify for a smaller rebate against the cost of heating and insulation work. Warm Front operates in England but similar schemes operate in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Contact Warm Front for further details of the scheme in England.

▶ [page 7](#)

▶ [Continued on next page](#)



► **Continued from previous page**

- Even an energy-efficient home costs money to heat. The Warm Front Scheme is specifically intended to help older people meet the extra costs of winter, but you should **make sure that you are getting any benefits that you are entitled to**. Contact your local Age Concern to arrange a benefits check. ► **back cover**

For example, **most people aged 60 or over are entitled to the Winter Fuel Payment**, paid by the Government to assist with heating costs. Previous recipients should get the payment automatically. If you have not received the payment before contact the Winter Fuel Payment helpline for further details. ► **page 7**

If you get Pension Credit Guarantee Credit you may receive an extra cold-weather payment during periods of prolonged cold temperatures.

If you are over 60 ask your energy supplier to put you on its Priority Service Register. This entitles you to services including a free annual safety check. **Contact your supplier if you are having trouble meeting your bills**. Companies should not disconnect all-pensioner households during the winter months.



Useful organisations

Benefit Enquiry line

Government-run information line providing information on benefits for disabled people.

Tel: 0800 88 22 00 (free call)

Email: Bel-Customer-Services@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Energy Saving Trust

National organisation, linked to a network of local advice centres, providing information and advice on how to improve energy efficiency. The helpline offers free, independent and local energy-saving advice.

Tel: 0800 512 012 (free call)

Website: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

NHS Direct

Telephone service staffed by experienced nurses offering advice and information about health, illnesses, and health services.

Tel: 0845 4647 (lo-call rate)

Websites:

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

www.nhschoices.nhs.uk

Warm Front

Scheme offering heating and insulation grants in England, run by the Eaga Partnership on behalf of the Government.

Tel: 0800 316 2805 (free call)

Website: www.warmfront.co.uk

Winter Fuel Payment helpline

For information and application forms to claim the payment.

Tel: 0845 9 15 15 15 (lo-call rate)

Website: www.thepensionerservice.gov.uk/winterfuel

How Age Concern can help

The Age Concern Information Line and website offer a wide range of information on issues affecting older people. Call us free on 0800 00 99 66 or visit www.ageconcern.org.uk

If you live in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, contact your national Age Concern.

- **Age Concern Northern Ireland**
Tel: 028 9024 5729 (national call rate)
Website: www.ageconcernni.org
- **Age Concern Scotland (Scottish Helpline for Older People)**
Tel: 0845 125 9732 (lo-call rate)
Website: www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk
- **Age Concern Cymru**
Tel: 029 2043 1555 (national call rate)
Website: www.accymru.org.uk

Your local Age Concern provides a wide range of services for older people. Contact details may be below. If not, call 0800 00 99 66 for details of your nearest Age Concern.