

Keep Warm Keep Well

Advice for...

Over 60s

Low-income families

People living with a disability

About this booklet

This booklet has been produced by the Department of Health, in association with other partners.

It aims to help you maintain good health during winter and take advantage of the financial help and benefits available.

Be prepared for the cold weather

There's more to feeling 'under the weather' than most people realise. The cold and wintry conditions can cause severe illness and, in the worst cases, people can die. The cold weather, combined with low levels of sunlight after the clocks go back, means that many of us feel in poor health.

Severe cold snaps like those we suffered last winter can have dramatic effects on everyday life, especially for those people who are already vulnerable as a result of their age, illness or disability. The Met Office provides weather forecasts on radio and TV, and tuning in to these bulletins regularly can help you keep up to date with the weather. Severe weather warnings are also issued on the Met Office website at **www.metoffice.gov.uk**, or you can ring the Customer Centre on **0870 900 0100**. The centre is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide you with accurate and timely weather information so that you can stay one step ahead of the weather.

Staying healthy this winter

We're all more likely to feel the chill in winter, but cold weather can lead to very serious health problems, such as heart attacks, strokes or pneumonia, and sometimes the cold weather can even kill – especially if you have a long-term health condition or are 65 or over. There are several things that you can do to help yourself stay healthy in winter.

Get a free seasonal flu jab

Not only is seasonal flu unpleasant, but it can also cause serious illnesses, such as pneumonia or bronchitis. In an average year, 15 out of 100 people will contract seasonal flu – in the worst cases it can result in a stay in hospital, or even death. You are more at risk if you have a long-term health condition, are older, or are pregnant.

You can protect yourself against seasonal flu by getting an annual flu jab. You can get a free jab if you:

- have serious heart, lung or kidney disease or diabetes;
- have a weak immune system caused by disease or medical treatment;
- have had a stroke or TIA (transient ischaemic attack);
- are aged 65 or over; or
- are pregnant.

Contact your GP or talk to your pharmacist if you think you might qualify for a free flu jab.

Avoid catching colds or flu

Colds and flu spread very easily. Young children in particular can be at risk of becoming unwell, as their immune systems are still developing. It's worth following these simple and obvious hygiene measures to reduce the risk of catching and spreading infections.

- Always cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and encourage visitors and relatives to do the same.
- Throw away used tissues as soon as possible.
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, and use a hand sanitiser gel when you're out and about.
- Stock up on over-the-counter cough and cold remedies.

Living a healthy lifestyle

You probably know that keeping yourself as fit and healthy as you can is important all year round, but your lifestyle can make even more of a difference when it comes to keeping well in winter.

Eat well

Eating regular meals will help keep your energy levels up during winter.

- Have plenty of hot food and drinks.
- Plan your meals and keep your diet as varied as possible. Aim to include your daily five portions of fruit and veg. Remember that tinned and frozen fruit and vegetables count towards your five a day.
- Stock up on tinned and frozen foods, so that you don't have to go out too much when it's cold or icy.

Parents on certain benefits may be eligible for free weekly Healthy Start vouchers, which they can swap for milk, fruit, vegetables, infant formula milk and vitamins. To find out if you qualify and for more tips and advice on healthy eating visit www.healthystart.nhs.uk or call the Healthy Start Issuing Unit on **0845 607 6823**.

Stay active

We all know that exercise is good for your overall health – and it can keep you warm in winter. If you can stay active, even moderate exercise can bring health benefits.

- If possible, try to move around at least once an hour. But remember to speak to your GP before starting any exercise plan.

Dress for the weather

- Wear lots of thin layers – clothes made from cotton, wool or fleecy fibres are particularly good and help to maintain body heat.

Heating your home effectively and safely

Some of these energy-saving tips may seem obvious, but they can make a big difference when it comes to reducing your fuel bills.

- By setting your heating to the right temperature, you can keep your home warm and lower your bills. Your main living room should be around **18–21°C** (64–70°F), and the rest of the house at least **16°C** (61°F). Above this and you may be wasting money; below this and you may be risking your health.

- Set your heating to come on just before you get up and switch off after you've gone to bed. If it's very cold, set your heating to come on earlier and turn off later rather than turning the thermostat up.
- If you can't heat all the rooms you use, heat the living room throughout the day and your bedroom just before you go to bed. Remember to close curtains and shut doors to keep heat in the rooms you use most.
- Heating your home safely is really important. Remember to get your heating system checked regularly, and keep your home well ventilated.
- If you have open fires make sure they are properly ventilated. Use safety guards and don't hang your washing near the open flames. If you use a fire or heater in your bedroom at night, always keep a window and the door open.
- Use your electric blanket as instructed and get it tested every three years. Remember never to use an electric blanket and a hot water bottle together.
- Switch your appliances (such as TVs and microwaves) off rather than leaving them on standby.

Keeping the heat in

Insulating your home not only helps to keep it warm and healthy, but it will also help to keep your heating costs down.

- Fit draught proofing to seal any gaps around windows and doors.
- Make sure that your loft has at least 10–11 inches (270mm) of insulation. Any home with 4 inches (100mm) or less should have it topped up.

- If you have wall cavities, make sure that they are insulated too.
- Insulate your hot water cylinder and pipes.

For more information on installing insulation and to find an approved National Insulation Association (NIA) installer in your area, call the enquiry line on **08451 63 63 63** or visit **www.nationalinsulationassociation.org.uk**

Carbon monoxide poisoning

Incorrectly installed, poorly maintained or poorly ventilated cooking and heating appliances can give off carbon monoxide – a poisonous gas which you can't see, smell or taste but which kills more than 50 people a year in England and Wales. Low levels of carbon monoxide can cause serious harm to your health if breathed in over a long time.

- Have your cooking and heating appliances, flues and chimneys serviced at least once a year by a suitably trained, reputable, registered engineer.
- Fit an audible carbon monoxide alarm that meets European Standard EN50291.
- Keep rooms well ventilated when using an appliance, and stop using an appliance if you think it may be giving off carbon monoxide gas.
- If you suffer from symptoms such as food poisoning, viral infections, flu or simple fatigue and think they could be caused by carbon monoxide, see your doctor at once and say you think it might be carbon monoxide poisoning.

To find out more about carbon monoxide safety, call the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Gas Safety Advice Line on **0800 300 363** (8am–8pm Mon–Fri and 10am–4pm Sat) or visit www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/index.htm

For general health advice and information visit www.nhs.uk/carbonmonoxide

Financial help to heat your home

There are grants, benefits and sources of advice available to make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating or help with bills. It's worthwhile claiming all the benefits you are entitled to.

Winter Fuel Payment

This is a tax-free benefit to help pay for heating during winter. You could be eligible if you have reached the qualifying age and you normally live in Great Britain. For winter 2010/11 people born on or before 5 July 1950 will have reached the qualifying age.

How much could I get?

This year you could get a Winter Fuel Payment of up to £250 for households with someone who qualifies aged up to 79, or up to £400 for someone aged 80 or over. The exact amount you'll get depends on your circumstances during the qualifying week of 20–26 September 2010, such as your age, whether you live alone and whether you're getting Pension Credit, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

You will get the payment automatically if:

- you qualify; and
- you got a Winter Fuel Payment last winter and you still meet the conditions for getting it, or you got State Pension or another benefit, except Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Child Benefit, during the week of 20–26 September 2010.

Most payments are made over a number of weeks from November onwards. You should get your payment by Christmas – if you haven't, you should make a claim. All claims must be received on or before 30 March 2011.

To find out more about Winter Fuel Payments, call **08459 15 15 15** (8.30am–4.30pm Mon–Fri, textphone **0845 601 5613**) or visit **www.direct.gov.uk/winterfuel**

The Warm Front Scheme

The Warm Front Scheme provides government-funded grants towards insulation and heating improvements to make your home warmer, healthier and more energy efficient. Grants are available for people in England who own their home or rent it from a private landlord and are on certain benefits, and:

- are 60 or over; or
- have a child under 16; or
- are pregnant and have a maternity certificate MAT B1; or
- have a disability.

The Warm Front Scheme is available in England only.

For a full list of the benefits and to apply, please download an application form from **www.warmfront.co.uk** or call **0800 316 2805**.

How much could I get?

You could receive a grant towards insulation and heating improvements for your home up to the value of £3,500, or up to £6,000 if your home uses oil central heating. You can also get advice on energy efficiency to lower your energy bills.

What improvements are available?

If you are eligible for the Warm Front Scheme, you will receive a free survey of your property, which includes energy efficiency advice.

The Warm Front Scheme can provide insulation and heating improvements, including loft, cavity-wall and hot-water-tank insulation and draught proofing, a new gas or oil central heating system or repairs to your existing central heating system.

How to apply

- Call the Warm Front team free on **0800 316 2805** (8am–6pm Mon–Fri and 9am–5pm Sat).
- Visit **www.warmfront.co.uk**

Each year in the UK, billions of pounds worth of benefits are not claimed. It's important to make sure that you're claiming everything you're entitled to. For a free and confidential Benefit Entitlement Check, call **0800 072 9006**.

If the adviser finds that you are entitled to a benefit that will qualify you for a Warm Front grant, the Warm Front team will be able to process your application for the grant.

Heating Rebate Scheme

If you do not receive a qualifying benefit but you are aged 60 or over and own your home or rent it from a private landlord, you could claim a Warm Front Heating Rebate of £300 towards the cost of repairing or installing a heating system. For more information and to apply, call free on **0800 316 6012** (please quote **MK851**). Lines are open 8am–6pm Mon–Fri and 8am–5pm Sat.

Cold Weather Payment

Cold Weather Payments are made during periods of very cold weather to help people pay for extra heating costs. To get a Cold Weather Payment, the average temperature where you live must be recorded as, or forecast to be, 0°C or below for seven days in a row. You may be able to get Cold Weather Payments if you are getting:

- Pension Credit;
- Income Support and have a pensioner or disability premium, or you have a child who is disabled or under 5 years old;
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance and have a pensioner or disability premium, or you have a child who is disabled or under 5 years old; or
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance in the main phase or income-related Employment and Support Allowance in the assessment phase and you are in receipt of a pensioner or disability premium or have a child who is disabled or under 5 years old.

To find out more about Cold Weather Payments contact Jobcentre Plus (you can find your nearest office in the phone book) or visit **www.direct.gov.uk/coldweatherpayment**

Other sources of financial support

If you're struggling to pay your energy bills, there are plenty of sources of help. Remember to contact your energy supplier in the first instance, as they may be able to offer you a special tariff or payment plan to help you stay on top of your bills.

Energy suppliers

Energy suppliers provide grants for free home insulation and other energy efficiency measures as part of their Carbon Emissions Reduction Targets. They also provide a range of further help including reduced or 'social' tariffs, energy efficiency advice and the Priority Service Register, which gives extra assistance to customers with disabilities or long-term health conditions. Customers who are over 70 or living on a low income can apply.

Grants and loans

If you are getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit, you may be eligible for a Community Care Grant, Budgeting Loan or Crisis Loan.

For confidential advice, call **0800 882 200** (8.30am–6.30pm Mon–Fri and 9am–1pm Sat, textphone **0800 243 355**).

Help and advice

The Home Heat Helpline

This is a free national helpline offering access to grants for free home insulation and reduced or 'social' tariffs from energy suppliers, as well as advice on managing your bills and reducing your energy use.

Call the Home Heat Helpline on **0800 33 66 99** (9am–8pm Mon–Fri and 10am–2pm Sat, minicom **0800 027 2122**) or visit **www.homeheathelpline.org.uk**

Age UK

Age UK is the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged. Many local Age Concern branches are changing their name to Age UK. It offers advice and information for people in later life on welfare and disability benefits, health and community care issues, housing and help with heating. Local Age UK/Age Concern branches offer a range of services including benefit checks, exercise and social activities, lunch clubs and day centres.

For free information or contact details for your local Age UK/Age Concern branch, call Age UK Advice on **0800 169 6565** (8am–7pm, seven days a week). Alternatively visit **www.ageuk.org.uk**

Gingerbread

Gingerbread provides advice and practical support for single parents. Call the helpline on **0800 802 0925** (9am–5pm Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri and 9am–8pm Wed). Your call is confidential, and completely **free** if you call from a landline or from the following mobile phone networks – 3, T-Mobile, Vodafone, O₂, Orange and Virgin. Alternatively, visit **www.gingerbread.org.uk**

Scope and DIAL UK

These organisations offer the best combination of local knowledge and national disability expertise, providing free, impartial and expert information, advice and support to disabled people and their families.

To contact **Scope**, call the freephone helpline on **0808 800 3333** (9am–5pm weekdays and closed at weekends and on Bank Holidays), email **response@scope.org.uk** or visit **www.scope.org.uk**

You can still contact **DIAL UK** or your local DIAL UK independent member group in the usual ways. For more information. Call **01302 310123**, email **dialuk@scope.org.uk** or visit **www.dialuk.info**

Citizens Advice

Your local bureau will be able to give you advice on benefits, heating, grants and debt.

Look under 'C' in the Yellow Pages or visit **www.citizensadvice.org.uk** for more information or to find your local bureau.

Call charges

If you call from a BT landline:

- **0800** and **0808** numbers are free;
- **0845** numbers cost maximum 5p a minute; and
- **0870** numbers cost maximum 7.5p a minute.

Calls from mobiles and other networks may vary – check with your service provider.

Your top five tips for keeping warm and well

- 1** Heat your home well. By setting your heating to the right temperature (18–21°C or 64–70°F), you can keep your home warm and your bills as low as possible.
- 2** Get financial support. There are grants, benefits and sources of advice available to make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating or help with bills. It's worthwhile claiming all the benefits you are entitled to.
- 3** Eat well. Food is a vital source of energy, which helps to keep your body warm. Try to make sure that you have hot meals and drinks regularly throughout the day.
- 4** Get a flu jab. You can get a free jab from your GP to protect against seasonal flu if you are over 65, have a long-term health condition or are pregnant.
- 5** Look after yourself and others. On cold days try to avoid going outside; however, if you do need to, remember to wrap up warm. If you have an older neighbour or relative, look out for them during winter to make sure that they are safe and well.



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