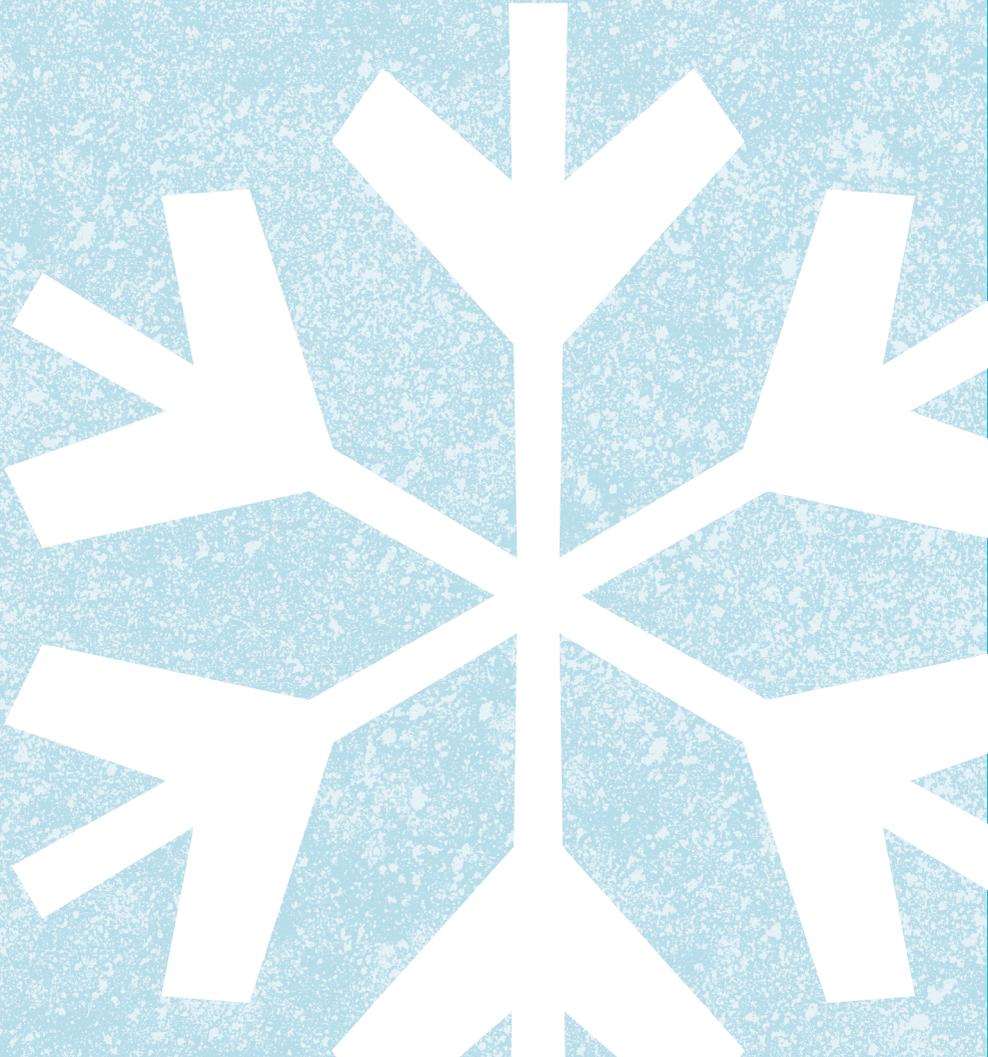


Being winter wise



advice and support for older age
**Independent
Age**

Helping you to look after yourself during the
coldest months





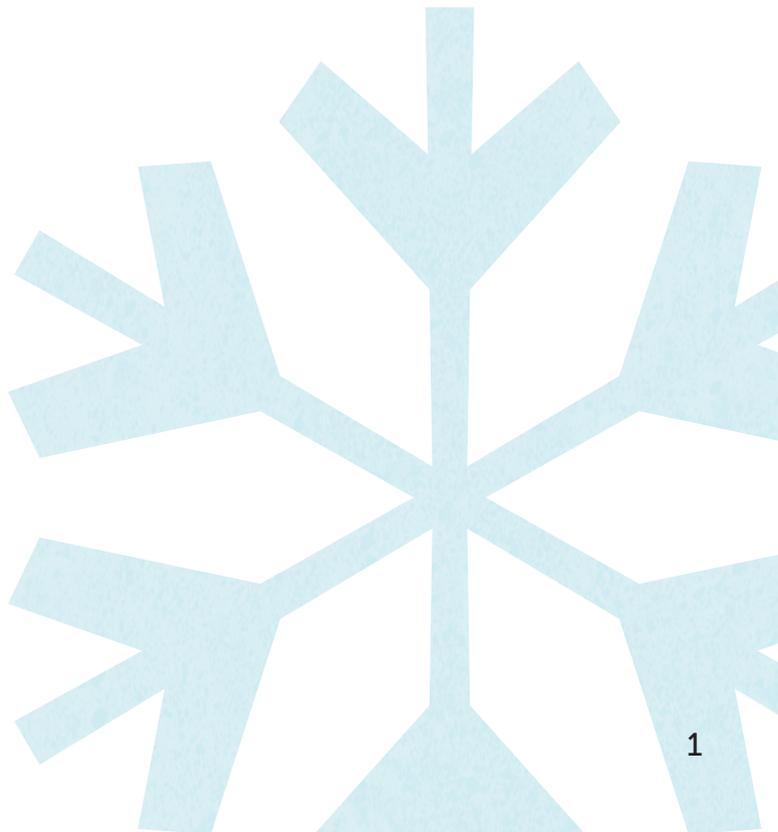
Winter can be a difficult time of the year for many of us. Dark evenings and icy pavements can make it hard to get out, while cold weather can make us vulnerable to illness.

And it's not just severe weather that can make us unwell - even average winter temperatures can affect our health. Thankfully, by being prepared and following the suggestions in this guide, you can stay as healthy and safe as possible this winter.

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1

Looking after yourself

Wrap up warm

Layer your clothes to stay warm - the layers will trap warm air between them. Wear a hat and gloves when you go outside and wrap a scarf around your face to warm the air you breathe in.



Take care when going outside in icy weather

If you absolutely have to go out when it's icy, wear shoes with good grip and a warm lining, or put on thick socks. Keep grit and/or salt to put on your path. Some councils provide free bags of this or you can buy it from a DIY store.

Eat well

Have hot drinks and hot meals regularly throughout the day. Food is a vital source of energy which helps keep you warm. Have plenty of fruit and vegetables to boost your immune system.





Drink more milk

The NHS recommends drinking more milk and having more dairy products in winter to boost your immune system and help prevent colds. They contain protein and vitamins A and B12 as well as calcium to keep your bones strong.

Keep your cupboards and freezer well stocked

Keep basic food items for times when it's too cold to go out. Think about stocking up on tinned soup, baked beans, long-life milk and fruit juice, ready-made sauces, pasta and rice. Keep frozen vegetables, meat, fish and bread in your freezer.



Stay active

Get outside if it isn't icy or too cold - it can boost your mood to get outdoors while it's still daylight. If you're indoors, don't sit still for more than an hour. Moving around your home can help to keep you warm.

2 Staying healthy

Get your flu jab

Have a flu jab every year. It's free if you're 65 or over, a carer or have certain health conditions. Flu is more than just a bad cold and can increase your risk of more serious illnesses such as pneumonia. Make an appointment with your GP or see if your local pharmacy offers the flu jab.

Check you've had a pneumo jab

The pneumo (or pneumococcal) jab is a one-off jab that protects against pneumonia, meningitis and septicaemia. You're eligible for one if you're 65 or over.

Restock your medicine cabinet

Keep a range of everyday medicines at home in case you get ill, such as paracetamol, ibuprofen, cough medicine, lozenges and sore throat sprays.

Ask your pharmacist for advice and let them know about any medications you take which may interact with over-the-counter remedies.





Visit your pharmacist

Your pharmacist is a great source of advice if you're feeling unwell - and you don't even have to make an appointment. Some pharmacies run a minor ailment scheme. Under this scheme, if the pharmacist thinks you need medicine for a minor illness and you don't pay for prescriptions, they can give you the medicine free of charge.

Ask your pharmacy if they offer a home delivery service for your repeat prescriptions too. This can be especially helpful in cold weather.



Get enough vitamin D

Lack of sunshine in winter can mean you don't get enough vitamin D, which can make you feel tired. The main source of vitamin D is sunlight but you can also get it from oily fish (such as salmon, mackerel and sardines), eggs, meat, margarine and some cereals and dairy products.

The government recommends that people at risk of vitamin D deficiency - including everyone aged 65 or over - take a daily supplement. Speak to your GP or pharmacist for advice.

3 Keeping your home warm

Check the thermostat

Being cold isn't just uncomfortable - it can also be very bad for your health. Low temperatures increase the risk of flu as well as a heart attack, stroke or hypothermia. Your living room should be around 70°F (21°C) and your other rooms should be at least 64°F (18°C).

Keep warm at night

A hot water bottle or electric blanket (but never both together) can warm up your bed. Check whether you can keep your blanket on all night or should switch it off before you get in. Keep your bedroom window closed at night when it's cold - low temperatures can raise your blood pressure and put you at risk of a stroke or heart attack.



Use simple tips to keep your home warm

Draw your curtains before it gets dark to keep the heat in (and consider getting thermal or heavy ones to keep your room warmer). Don't block your radiators with furniture - keep them clear so heat can circulate - and put draught excluders round doors and windows. Contact the Energy Saving Trust for more tips ([0300 123 1234](tel:03001231234), energysavingtrust.org.uk).



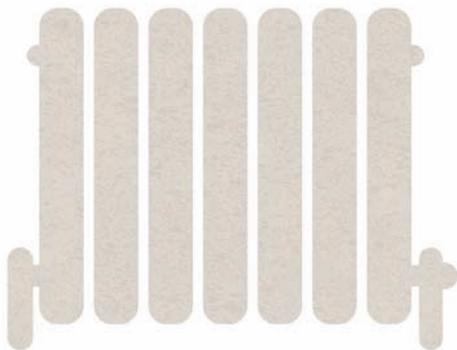
Get your home insulated

Insulating your loft and cavity walls and fitting a jacket to your hot water cylinder can make your home much warmer and save money on your bills. Read our free factsheet **Housing: paying for the maintenance of your home** ([0800 319 6789](tel:08003196789), independentage.org) to find out more about home insulation and how to pay for it.

Apply for a grant to make your home warmer

There are grants available to make your home more energy efficient, which will make it feel warmer and reduce your fuel bills too. You could be eligible for the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme if you get certain benefits - including Pension Credit - and own or privately rent your home. You may get help with insulating your home, replacing your boiler or upgrading your heating.

Contact the Energy Saving Advice Service to find out if you're eligible ([0300 123 1234](tel:03001231234), energysavingtrust.org.uk).



4 Making winter more affordable

Claim the money you're entitled to

You probably already get a Winter Fuel Payment of between £100 and £300 each year (call the Winter Fuel Payments helpline on **0845 915 1515** if not), but did you know what else you may be entitled to?

If you get Pension Credit, you should automatically get a Cold Weather Payment of £25 when the temperature in your area is at 0°C (32°F) or below for seven days in a row.

You may qualify for a £140 discount on your electricity bill if you receive Guarantee Pension Credit or you're on a low income, even if you use a pre-pay meter. Contact your energy supplier or the Warm Home Discount Scheme to find out more (**0345 603 9439**, gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme).





Check you're on the best fuel tariff

Switching supplier can be the best way to save money and may be easier than you think. Ofgem, the energy regulator, has created a website

([goenergyshopping.co.uk](https://www.goenergyshopping.co.uk))

that can help you find out if you could save money by switching. If you're not online, call one of the energy switching companies for advice.

Age UK ([0800 169 6565](tel:08001696565)) has a free factsheet, **Switching energy supplier**, with a list of their telephone numbers.



Get help if you're in debt

If you're struggling to pay your energy bills, contact your supplier to set up a repayment plan. Charis Grants can direct you to sources of financial help with fuel bills ([01733 421 021](tel:01733421021), [charisgrants.com](https://www.charisgrants.com)). Remember that if you live in a home where everyone is of pensionable age, you can't be cut off by your energy supplier between October and March.

About Independent Age

Independent Age is a growing charity, helping thousands of older people across the UK to live well with dignity, choice and control.

We offer free, confidential advice and information and provide services such as befriending to promote wellbeing and reduce loneliness.

In addition to this, we use the knowledge and understanding gained from our frontline services to campaign on issues that affect older people, such as poverty, loneliness and carers' rights.

For more information, visit our website
www.independentage.org

Speak to one of our advisers for free and confidential advice and information. Lines are open 8am-8pm, Monday to Friday, and 9am-5pm, Saturday and Sunday. Freephone **0800 319 6789** or email advice@independentage.org



advice and support for older age

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