

A winter guide 2006/2007

Keep Warm Keep Well



Advice on:

Keeping warm and healthy
Home improvements grants
Heating your home
Help with bills

A joint venture by:



Campaigning for Warm Homes



Useful Telephone Numbers
NHS DIRECT **0845 46 47**

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Why keeping warm matters

People are more likely to catch cold or flu in winter. The cold weather can also cause other serious health problems – like heart attacks, stroke, and pneumonia.

This means it's essential to keep warm in winter.

What's in this booklet

This booklet has advice on how to stay warm and well this winter. It looks at three areas: health, lifestyle and home heating. Each section has information on how to prepare for winter, tips for what to do in cold weather and contact details for where you can get more help and advice.

There is also information about:

- **help for people aged 60 or over – a £200 Winter Fuel Payment to help towards the cost of keeping your home warm**
- **government grants available for heating and insulation home improvements – call the Warm Front Scheme on 0800 072 0151.**

Looking out for neighbours

If you have an older person as a neighbour or a relative, please look out for them in the winter months and follow the advice in this booklet.

If curtains aren't opened during the day, or there are no lights on in the evening, there may be something wrong. Try knocking on the door to see if there's an answer. If not, contact a relative or friend who you think may have a key.

If you think there are serious grounds for concern, contact the emergency services.

Phone call charges

This booklet gives contact numbers for a number of different organisations.

All the **0800** and **0808** telephone numbers in this booklet are free if you call from a BT landline. Calls from mobiles and other networks may vary. Your service provider may charge a minimum cost per call.

Calls to **0845** numbers cost a maximum of 4 pence per minute from a BT landline. Calls from mobiles and other networks may vary. Your service provider may charge a minimum cost per call.

Calls to **0870** numbers cost a maximum of 7.5 pence per minute from a BT landline. Calls from mobiles and other networks may vary. Your service provider may charge a minimum cost per call.

A photograph of an elderly Black woman with short, dark hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a light blue, textured knit sweater. She is seated at a table covered with a white tablecloth. In front of her is a white teacup with a colorful floral pattern, which she is holding with her right hand. To her left, on the table, is a dark blue teapot and another white teacup on a saucer. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a home interior with warm lighting.

keep well

WARM FRONT SCHEME **0800 072 0151**
WINTER FUEL PAYMENT **08459 15 15 15**

Staying healthy

As well as increasing the chances of slips and falls, cold winter weather can cause problems by lowering your body temperature – which can increase the risk of heart attacks, strokes and breathing difficulties.

Preparation – have a free flu jab

As well as being an extremely unpleasant experience, flu can be a serious health hazard. You should talk to your GP about having a free flu jab if you:

- **are aged 65 years or over**
- **have serious heart disease, serious renal disease, diabetes mellitus or serious respiratory disease (including asthma)**
- **have lowered immunity caused by a disease or medical treatment.**

Your GP may also suggest you have a flu jab if you have serious liver disease.

When you see your GP, also ask whether you need the 'pneumo jab' to protect against serious forms of pneumococcal infection. It's available to everyone aged 65 or over and for younger people with certain serious medical conditions.

Frequently and thoroughly washing your hands will also help you avoid flu and other infections. And, if you do have a cough, cold or flu, there are things you can do to reduce the risk of spreading the infection to others:

- cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze, using a tissue whenever possible
- throw used tissues away promptly in the nearest bin
- wash your hands with soap and water after coughing or sneezing

Finally, you should also stock up on over-the-counter remedies to tackle coughs or colds. Your local pharmacist can advise on how to manage minor ailments including the sale of over-the-counter medicines that don't require a prescription. They can also provide advice on promoting a healthy lifestyle, for example, stopping smoking or improving your diet.

A photograph of a man and a woman exercising on treadmills in a gym. The man is in the foreground, wearing a light blue shirt, and the woman is behind him, wearing a dark blue shirt. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing other gym equipment.

keep healthy

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WARM FRONT SCHEME 0800 072 0151
WINTER FUEL PAYMENT 08459 15 15 15

Preparation – give up smoking

Whatever your age, giving up smoking will improve your health and make you more ready for winter. Within eight hours of stopping smoking, blood oxygen levels return to normal, and your chances of having a heart attack start to fall. Within two to twelve weeks of stopping, circulation improves throughout the body and walking and exercise get easier. For confidential advice and details of local NHS Stop Smoking Services, call the **NHS Smoking Helpline** on **0800 169 0 169** or textphone **0800 169 0 171**.

During winter – coping with flu

If you get flu, the best way to deal with it is to:

- **stay at home and rest**
- **drink plenty of non-alcoholic drinks – to replace the fluid you lose from sweating**
- **eat if you feel able to.**

If you live on your own, let a friend or neighbour know you're ill – so they can check on you

Contact your GP if:

- **you already have a heart or chest complaint, diabetes, or a serious medical condition**
- **the symptoms persist or get worse**
- **you have chest pains or become short of breath.**

During winter – hypothermia

Hypothermia is a condition where the body becomes dangerously cold. It can be caused by brief exposure to extreme cold or by prolonged exposure to mild cold.

That means it's a serious concern for older people who might be prone to falls or collapses. If it's not treated quickly, hypothermia will be fatal.

The danger signs are:

- **very cold skin even under clothes, for example, across the stomach or under the arms**
- **drowsiness and slurred speech**
- **loss of sensation – not feeling cold even when it is cold.**

What to do:

- **call an ambulance immediately – dial 999**
- **try to warm the person gradually by warming the room and giving them a warm drink. Don't give them alcohol or try to warm them up quickly.**

Help and advice – NHS Direct

NHS Direct provides confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day.

If you are feeling ill, and are unsure what to do; would like to find out more about a condition or treatment; or need details of local health services, NHS Direct can help.

- **Visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk**
- **Go to NHS Direct Interactive on digital satellite TV by pressing the 'Interactive' button on your remote control**
- **Call 0845 4647 – or textphone 0845 606 4647 if you are deaf or hard of hearing.**

NHS Direct has interpreters so you can get advice in your own language.

For patients' safety, all calls are recorded.

Living well

The best way to get through winter is to keep warm and to follow as healthy a lifestyle as possible.

What you eat and drink, and the exercise you take, can make a big difference. Wearing the right clothes is also very important.

Preparation – food

A balanced diet will help keep you warm and healthy in the winter.

Try to keep a stock of food from each of the five groups below in case you can't get out to the shops in very cold weather.

- Group 1:** bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta, chapattis
- Group 2:** fresh fruit and vegetables
- Group 3:** milk and dairy foods
- Group 4:** meat, fish, eggs, peas and pulses such as beans (including baked beans)
- Group 5:** foods containing fat and sugar

During winter – clothing

Wearing the right kind of clothes can help keep you much warmer.

At home

Wear several thin layers of clothes – this traps body heat better than one thick layer. Clothes made from wool, cotton, or fleecy synthetic fibres are best.

In very cold weather, make sure you keep warm in bed at night. Bed socks, thermal underwear, a nightdress or pyjamas and a head covering – like a nightcap or a scarf round your head – are all good ideas.

Outdoors

Again, wear several thinner layers of clothing under your coat, rather than one thick layer. You lose a lot of heat through your head, so wear a hat or headscarf.

To keep your feet warm and to stop you falling, wear flat, dry, warm, non-slip shoes or boots.

dress well

During winter – eating

Eating well is a vital part of staying warm and healthy in winter.

You should:

- **have at least one hot meal a day**
- **have hot drinks throughout the day – and one before bedtime**
- **keep a flask with a hot drink in it by your bed in case you feel cold at night.**

Try to eat something from each of the five main food groups each day (see page 8). Also try to have at least five portions of fruit or vegetables each day.

If you are on a special diet, talk to your doctor before you make any changes to what you eat or drink.

During winter – exercise

Staying active is good for your health – whatever the time of year. Moderate exercise, like walking, for example, can be very beneficial.

If you have an exercise routine, try to keep it up in winter as it will help keep you warm. Don't take risks in wet or icy weather, though. And, if you are outside in the cold for whatever reason, try to keep moving rather than standing or sitting.

At home, try not to stay sitting still for long periods. If you space chores out through the day, you can alternate between rest and activity.



keep moving

Help and advice

General help for older people

Age Concern

Age Concern has over 400 organisations and groups across the UK, offering advice and services like benefits checks and handy person schemes. To find your local branch:

- call **0800 009 966** (8am to 7pm every day)
- visit **www.ageconcern.org.uk**
- or write to (in England): Age Concern Information Line, Freepost (SWB 30375), Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7ZZ

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Citizens Advice Bureaux provide advice on benefits, debt, heating and on grants that may be available. Visit **www.adviceguide.org.uk** or contact your local bureau.

Help the Aged

Help the Aged's SeniorLine gives information for older people and their carers about welfare and disability benefits, and about residential and community care issues.

- call **0808 800 6565** (9am to 4pm, Mon-Fri).
- or write to: Help the Aged, 207-221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ

WRVS

WRVS brings communities together to help older people avoid loneliness, become more independent and enjoy life more. To find out more:

- call **029 2073 9000**
- or visit **www.wrvs.org.uk**

Help for people with disabilities

Disabled Living Centres

Disabled Living Centres give carers, older people and healthcare workers the opportunity to try out products and equipment to help them manage the tasks of daily life. For details of your nearest centre:

- call **0870 770 2866**
- or write to: The Disabled Living Centres Council, Redbank House, 4 St. Chad's Street, Manchester, M8 8QA

Disabled Living Foundation

The Disabled Living Foundation gives advice on equipment to assist with all aspects of daily living.

- call their helpline on **0845 130 9177** (10am to 4pm, Mon-Fri)
- or write to: Information Officer, The Disabled Living Foundation, 380-384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU



Keeping warm

With some planning now, you can make a big difference to how warm your house is in the winter. This section looks at how to stop heat escaping, how to use heaters more effectively, how to manage your heating bills and what financial help is available.

Preparation – get your home ready for winter

If your home is poorly insulated, it'll be cold in winter and will cost more to heat. To make your home warmer in winter you can:

- **fit draught-proofing – to help seal gaps around windows and doors**
- **insulate your property – to reduce heat loss**
- **lag your hot water cylinder and pipes, including those in your loft**
- **have your heating system serviced annually. Some gas or electricity suppliers offer free safety checks.**

For more guidance on preparing your house for winter, including information on financial help, turn to page 20.

Buying new heaters or fires

If you're planning to buy individual fires or heaters, you can get advice from the **Energy Efficiency Advice Centre** on **0800 512 012**.

If you plan to buy an electric heater, make sure it has a thermostat.

If you're buying a new open fire, check it has an air control to regulate the burning rate. For advice on open fires, call the **Solid Fuel Association** on **0845 601 4406** or visit **www.solidfuel.co.uk**

If you're a tenant, check if your landlord can provide a heater or if there are any restrictions on the types of heater you can have.

Protecting against carbon monoxide

Carbon monoxide kills more than 50 people each year in England and Wales – mainly because of incorrectly installed, poorly maintained or poorly ventilated cooking and heating equipment.

Because you can't see or smell carbon monoxide, the best way to protect yourself is to have all gas and fossil fuel appliances and flues serviced regularly. The servicing (and any installation) should be done by trained, reputable, registered engineers, eg. CORGI, HETAS – do not DIY.

Other tips:

- **keep rooms well ventilated when using an appliance**
- **fit a carbon monoxide alarm that meets British or European Standards (ie; with BS Kitemark)**
- **do not use gas cookers for heating**
- **do not sleep in a bedroom with a paraffin heater or a gas fire without a flue.**

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can be like food poisoning, viral infections or flu. They include headaches, tiredness, difficulty in thinking clearly and feeling sick. If you suffer from these symptoms:

- **see your doctor at once and**
- **call an engineer to check all your cooking and heating appliances.**

For more information, please contact:

- **HSE Gas Safety Line** – call **0800 300 363** or visit **www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/index.htm**
- **CORGI helpline** – call **0870 401 2300** or visit **www.corgi-group.com**
- **Solid Fuel Association (SFA) helpline** – call **0845 601 4406** or visit **www.solidfuel.co.uk**
- **CO-Awareness** – visit **www.co-awareness.co.uk**

During winter – heating your home

Here's some advice on keeping your home warm.

In the day

Set your thermostat at around 21°C (70°F) – and heat all the rooms you use in the day. If you can't, make sure you keep your living room warm throughout the day and heat your bedroom before going to bed.

Set the timer on your heating to come on before you get up and switch off when you go to bed. In very cold weather, rather than turn the thermostat up, set the heating to come on earlier. This means you won't be cold while you wait for your home to heat up.

If you have glass-fronted solid fuel fires, fill the firebox to the top and let the thermostatic air control manage the heat. If you have an open coal fire, keep the grate filled with 3 to 4 inches (75-100 mm) of fuel. Use the air control to set the burning rate.

Do:

- put guards on all open fires
- get your chimney swept at least once a year.

Don't:

- sit too close to a fire
- hang washing up to dry too close to fires – it causes condensation and is a fire risk
- block up air bricks in your walls.



At night

In winter, keep your bedroom window closed at night. If you have an electric blanket or a hot water bottle, they'll help you keep warm at night. You should never use them together, however, as you could electrocute yourself.

Check what type of electric blanket you have – some are designed only to warm the bed before you get in, not to be used throughout the night.

Age Concern and E.ON UK run a free scheme testing electric blankets to make sure they're safe. The scheme runs between October and February at selected locations. Contact Age Concern for more details. Trading Standards and Fire Brigades may also run electric blanket testing schemes. Keep a look out in your local press for details of a scheme near you.

During winter – paying heating bills

By following some simple energy saving tips, you can reduce your bills:

- **boil only the water you need – rather than filling the kettle completely**
- **let food cool to room temperature before you put it in the fridge or freezer**
- **don't leave appliances like televisions in stand-by mode – it can use nearly as much electricity as when they are on. Instead, switch them off properly.**

If you are struggling to pay gas or electricity bills, contact your supplier as soon as possible to avoid debt mounting up. They will have payment schemes that let you spread your bill out over the year. The **Home Heat Helpline 0800 33 66 99** can offer advice on this.

Before you do that, it's also a good idea to contact **energywatch** – the gas and electricity consumer watchdog. They offer free, independent advice, as does your local Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Concern and the Home Heat helpline.

As well as advice on bills, **energywatch** can help take up complaints, help you switch suppliers, register you for free services through your supplier, and let you know about grants and benefits that you may be missing out on. Contact the **energywatch Priority Consumer Team** on **0845 906 0708** or email them at **priority.consumers@energywatch.org.uk**

Gas and electricity companies will not disconnect pensioners between October and March – so make sure they know that you are a pensioner. Ask to sign up to the Priority Service Register and their Free Services Scheme – which can bring you a range of benefits.

Financial support – insulation and home improvement

Warm Front Scheme

The Warm Front Scheme gives grants worth up to £2,700 to make homes warmer and more energy-efficient.

You may qualify if you own your own home or rent it from a private landlord, and you receive disability benefit or an income-related benefit – like Disability Living Allowance.

The scheme offers energy-efficiency advice, two free energy-efficient light bulbs and a package of insulation and heating improvements, which are tailored to each home. These improvements can include installing gas, electric or oil central heating. (Some homes that need oil central heating may receive a larger grant of up to £4,000.)

The Warm Front Scheme is funded by the government and runs in England. It is managed by Eaga Partnership Ltd. To apply:

- call **0800 072 0151** or
- pull out and complete the application form on the centre page of this booklet, and send it to: Marketing, Eaga Partnership Ltd (MK723), Freepost NAT 13708, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1ZL

If you live outside England, you can get details of similar schemes in your area by contacting:

- **Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (Wales) 0800 316 2815**
- **Warm Homes (Northern Ireland) 0800 181 667**
- **Warm Deal (Scotland) 0800 072 0150**
- **Central Heating Programme (Scotland) 0800 316 1653**

Financial support – heating bills

Winter Fuel Payment

This winter, the Government will be making payments to people aged 60 and over to help with the costs of keeping warm in winter.

Qualifying

You should qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment if you are aged 60 or over on or before 24 September 2006 and normally live in Great Britain.

You are not entitled to a payment if during the week 18-24 September 2006:

- **you are in hospital receiving free in-patient treatment and have been for more than 52 weeks**
- **you are getting Pension Credit, income-based Job Seeker's Allowance and you live in a care home, an independent hospital, or Ilford Park Polish Resettlement Home and have been for the preceding 12 weeks**
- **you are subject to immigration control and are not entitled to help from DWP**
- **you are serving a custodial sentence.**

Value of the payments

The payments are:

- **a Winter Fuel Payment of up to £200 for people aged 60-79**
- **up to £300 for people aged 80 and over.**

The amount of money you get depends on your age and circumstances during the week of 18-24 September 2006.

Couples receiving Pension Credit or income-based Job Seeker's Allowance will get only one payment made to the person receiving that benefit, other couples will get £100 each (£150 each if both partners are aged 80 or over) if both partners are aged 60 or over and entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment.

When you receive the money

If you receive a State Pension or other social security benefit (excluding Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, or Child Benefit) during the week of 18-24 September 2006, you should get your Winter Fuel Payment automatically.

Winter Fuel Payments will be made over a number of weeks from November 2006. So don't worry if you receive your payment at a different time to someone else in your household, or other people who live near you.

You should also be paid automatically if you received a payment last winter and your circumstances have not changed. All automatic Winter Fuel Payments should be made by Christmas 2006. If you have not had your Winter Fuel Payment by then, you should make a claim.

The deadline for receiving completed claim forms is 30 March 2007.

More information

For advice on any aspect of **Winter Fuel Payments**, call the helpline on **08459 15 15 15** (8.30am to 4.30, Mon-Fri). If you are deaf or hard of hearing, please use textphone **0845 601 5613**. Please have your National Insurance number ready when you call.

You can also visit the website

www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/winterfuel

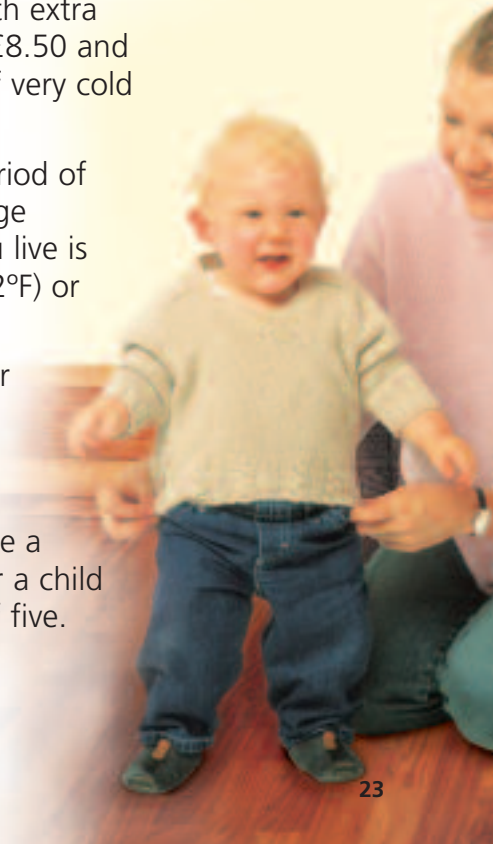
Cold Weather Payment

Cold Weather Payments are given in periods of exceptionally cold weather to help with extra heating costs. The payment is worth £8.50 and is automatically paid for each week of very cold weather to anyone who's eligible.

For the purpose of the payment, a period of 'very cold weather' is when the average temperature for the area in which you live is recorded as, or forecast to be, 0°C (32°F) or below over seven consecutive days.

You may be eligible for a cold weather payment if you get:

- Pension Credit or
- Income Support or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, and you have a pensioner or disability premium – or a child who is disabled or under the age of five.



The Home Heat helpline

The Home Heat helpline offers advice on subjects including cheaper payment schemes, grants for insulating your home, and how to register for extra services and government benefits, like winter fuel and cold weather payments.

Specially trained advisors can speak to other people on your behalf, such as friends, other family members, health workers, housing associations, Citizens Advice Bureaux and local authorities.

They can also offer help about how to stay healthy in cold weather and provide handy tips on how to conserve heat in your home. The phone number is **0800 33 66 99**.

Help and advice

Home Improvement Agencies

There are over 300 Home Improvement Agencies in the UK, which give advice on repairs and home improvements to older and disabled people. To find your nearest agency:

- call **0145 789 1909**
- write to Foundations, Bleaklow House, Howard Town Mill, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 8HT
- or visit **www-foundations.uk.com**, which has a searchable directory of agencies.

The Energy Saving Trust's Energy Efficiency Advice Centres

Local advisors can provide you with free, impartial advice on how to make your home more energy efficient and talk to you about the grants available in your area to implement energy efficient measures. Call **0800 512 012** for more information.

energywatch

To contact the Priority Consumer Team:

- call **0191 239 3291**
- write to Freepost RLYB/HJHH/THKS, Percy House, Percy Street, Newcastle NE1 4PW or
- email **priority.consumers@energywatch.org.uk**

National Energy Action (NEA)

NEA is a charity that campaigns for affordable warmth and improved energy efficiency in the homes of people who are vulnerable to the cold. Contact them by

- writing to NEA, St Andrew's House, 90-92 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle NE1 6SG
- or visiting **www.nea.org.uk**

Other sources of financial support

Local council grants

If you have a low income, your local council may be able to offer financial help with:

- house renovation and improvement – including insulation
- home repairs for small work and
- facilities to help disabled people to live independently in their own home.

How much you get will depend on the cost of the work and your own financial circumstances. You shouldn't start any work before your application is approved.

To apply, contact your local council. Age Concern or other local organisations may be able to help with the paperwork.

As part of the process, your council may need to send someone to inspect your home. Always ask for proof of identity before letting anyone in.

Pension Credit

Pension Credit is an entitlement for people aged 60 and over who are living in Great Britain. It could top up your weekly income to a guaranteed minimum level of £114.05 a week if you are single or £174.05 if you have a partner.

Pension Credit also rewards people aged 65 or over who have modest savings or income. This is called savings credit and could increase your income by up to £17.88 a week if you are single or £23.58 if you have a partner. You may still qualify for savings credit if your income is up to around £159 a week if you are single or £233 if you have a partner.

You may be entitled to more if you are a carer, are severely disabled or have housing costs.

The Pension Service can now also help you claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit at the same time as you apply for Pension Credit over the phone.

To find out more on Pension Credit call **0800 991 234** (or textphone **0800 169 0133** if you are deaf or hard of hearing). You can also read leaflet PC1L on the Pension Service website www.pensions.gov.uk/pensioncredit

Grants and loans

In some circumstances, you may be able to get community care grants, budgeting loans or crisis loans.

Benefit Enquiry Line

A confidential telephone helpline is available giving advice on benefits for disabled people and carers. Call **0800 882 200** (8.30am to 6.30pm, Mon-Fri, and 9.00am to 1.00pm on Saturdays). If you are deaf or hard of hearing, please use textphone **0800 243 355**. Calls are also welcome from RNID Typetalk.



Information about this booklet

The booklet is published in the following languages: English, Bengali, Cantonese, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Polish, Punjabi, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese; and an audio CD in Sylheti is also available. An English audio CD and a large print version of the booklet are available.

There is also an easy read guide for people with learning disabilities.

More copies

To order multiple copies of this booklet in any format, please:

- call **0870 155 5455**
- fax **0162 372 4524**
- visit **www.dh.gov.uk/socialcare**
- or write to DH Publications, PO Box 777, London SE1 6XH



Useful Telephone Numbers

NHS DIRECT 0845 46 47

advice on staying healthy

WARM FRONT SCHEME

0800 072 0151

grants to make homes warmer

WINTER FUEL PAYMENT

08459 15 15 15

for people aged 60 and over

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