

Hot Tips

Keeping warm, healthy and safe this winter

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Section 1:

Hot Tips on Energy

This is a guide to keeping yourself warm, healthy and safe during the winter months; these tips might even save you some money!

There are four steps you can take straight away.
For contact details of all agencies mentioned, see page 19.

Step One: Become more energy efficient

Being more energy efficient in and around the home can save you money and is good for the environment too. Simple measures such as those outlined on p.4 can help, but there are also agencies that specialise in giving advice on becoming energy efficient and grants available to help cover costs.

The Energy Saving Scotland advice centres (ESSacs), managed by the Energy Saving Trust, can help you

access national and local schemes, such as the Energy Assistance Package (EAP) from the Scottish Government. This scheme could help you get insulation for your home, or even a whole new heating system, it could also help you save money on your fuel bills and check if you're eligible for social tariffs.. The ESSacs can also advise on other grants that may be available, such as those from your local council or from a local care and repair service.

Your eligibility for the Energy Assistance Package may be improved if you meet the following criteria:


- You own your own home or rent from a private landlord
- Your home has a low energy rating score
- You are 75 or over, or 60 or over with no central heating
- You receive certain benefits, such as State pension credit, Disability living allowance

To find out how you could benefit from the Energy Assistance Package call
0800 512 012

Twelve Energy Saving Tips

Some common sense ideas and some you may not have thought about.

1. Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows.
2. Only boil enough water in the kettle for your immediate needs.
3. Don't leave lights on in empty rooms. Also, try using low energy light bulbs. They last up to 10 times longer than ordinary bulbs and use only a fifth of the electricity. They can save you around £40 over the lifetime of the bulb.
4. Set your thermostats correctly; reducing room temperature by 1°C could cut your heating bills by up to 10%. It is recommended that older people heat living areas to 23° C and non-living areas to 18°C. Also, check your hot water cylinder is set at around 60°C and that you only keep your hot water on for the hours you need it.
5. Don't leave your electrical appliances on standby; they will use almost the same amount of energy as if they were switched on. Turn them off at the wall.
6. Cook with lids on pans and match the lid to the pan size.
7. A dripping hot water tap wastes enough hot water in one week to fill half a bath, so fix leaking taps and make sure they're fully turned off.

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8. Don't place furniture in front of radiators.
 9. Wait until you have a full load before you use your washing machine; one full load uses less energy than two half loads. Also, avoid washing at high temperatures.
 10. Where possible, use a shower instead of a bath.
 11. Insulate water tanks and lag pipes and fit double or secondary glazing to keep the heat in.
 12. Choose the highest energy rated model (A or A+) when replacing electrical appliances such as fridges and washing machines. It will save you money over time.

Did you know?

As part of the UK's Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT), gas and electricity suppliers are required to offer energy advice, funding for loft and cavity wall insulation (including grants), and free energy saving light bulbs. Contact your energy supplier's energy efficiency helpline to find out the schemes currently on offer. Their telephone number will be printed on your fuel bills.



“Try using an online comparison service to find the best energy deal”

Step Two: Energy costs

To get the best deal for your energy, it is important to understand your annual energy use, and to compare all of the deals available in your area. Even if you don't want to switch supplier, it may still be possible to save by changing your tariff or payment method.

By changing your tariff or payment method, Ofgem estimate that you could save on average £100 a year.

To get the best deal, it's important to be clear about the amount of energy you use. Since July 2010, every bill you receive provides information on the previous year's consumption and costs. Use this information to compare the deals available in your area.

A comparison service is the easiest way to find the best deal. These are available online; some are also available by telephone. You should use one that meets Consumer Focus's confidence code (see Consumer Focus's website for details of those that meet the Code). This means that all of the deals offered in your area are available. It's usually possible to transfer to the new deal at the time.

Alternately, you can call Consumer Direct to request a note showing the different deals available in your area by post. If you want to move, contact the supplier to arrange the transfer.

If happy with your current supplier, you could still save money by changing your tariff or payment method. Generally, online direct debit tariffs offer the lowest cost; standard quarterly bills and pre-payment meters are more expensive. Larger suppliers offer social tariffs available to older customers depending on income and regardless of payment method. Contact your supplier directly to see if they can offer you a better deal.

Did you know?

If your bills are a problem a payment scheme can usually be arranged with your energy supplier, contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau. Don't ignore bills or you may risk disconnection.

A Note About Doorstep Selling

Doorstep salespeople won't provide details of all of the deals available in your area. They will only talk about those offered by the company for which they work. You are more likely to make savings using the approach described on the previous page

Energy companies may use doorstep selling to get you to sign up with them. If you're not expecting a salesperson to visit, it's called **cold calling**.

There are rules that salespeople who call at your home have to follow. They mustn't put you under pressure to sign if you're not ready and they must give you enough information to help you decide what you want to do.

The rules also say that salespeople have to behave in a responsible way. They must not use any tricks to try and get you to sign a contract without you realising it. And they mustn't use pressure to get you to sign a contract when you may not be ready to make up your mind.

If you get a visit from a doorstep salesperson, they must:

- Show ID and give you a number to call so that you can check their identity
- Only call between 9am and 8pm unless you have invited them to call outside these hours
- Check that they are talking to the person who is responsible for paying the bills
- Be honest about why they are calling
- Go away if you ask them to
- Get permission from the warden if they are visiting sheltered accommodation
- Give the correct information about prices

Step Three: Priority Services Register

The Priority Services Register is a scheme available to people who are of pensionable age, or who have a disability, hearing and/or visual impairment or long-term ill health. It means that energy suppliers have to offer a variety of free, optional services designed to make life easier for these customers.

Services on offer include:

- Password protection to help protect against bogus callers. You agree a unique password with your supplier for their staff to use when visiting your home
- Moving meters to a more convenient location free of charge
- Free gas safety checks
- Fitting of special controls and adaptors
- Advanced notification if your electricity supply has to be interrupted
- Special help if your gas supply is disrupted
- Bill nominee scheme – you can arrange for your bills, or a copy of them, to be sent to the address of a friend, relative or carer so that they can help you to read and check your bill
- Accessible information. Your supplier can provide consumer information, including meter reading and bills, in a format suitable for you, such as large print

Contact your supplier and ask to be added. Consumer Focus Scotland has a template letter you can use. Please note, you can only get some free services if you are receiving a means-tested or income-tested benefit. Also, some suppliers offer additional benefits, such as cold alarms.

Did you know?

If you have an energy problem you should contact your energy supplier in the first instance. Unresolved disputes can be investigated by the Energy Ombudsman. Consumer Direct can provide independent information and advice on your complaint.



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**“Check your
entitlements”**
.....

Step Four: Maximise your income

Maximising your income can help towards your fuel costs in the winter months. Every year many older people fail to claim their benefit entitlements which could be worth several hundred pounds depending on individual circumstances. If you are over 60 you can receive Winter Fuel Payments, even if you haven't retired. Contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau to find out how you can make a claim.

Your local CAB or Energy Saving Scotland advice centre can also check your eligibility for Pension Credit Benefit, Cold Weather Payments, Council Tax Benefit and Attendance Allowance.

Did you know?

Every year up to £5 billion in Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits – money intended for people on the lowest incomes – is going unclaimed by older people in the UK.

Cold Weather Payments are issued when the average temperature in your area is recorded as 0°C (freezing point) or below over seven consecutive days.

Section 2:

Hot Tips on Health

If you are unfortunate enough to become ill this winter, you can do a lot to help yourself get better. Many winter illnesses can be treated at home with basic medicines. If you don't feel well stay indoors and rest, keep warm or go to bed. Take plenty of non-alcoholic drinks and eat what you can. Here are our five steps to help you look after yourself this winter.

1. Have a well stocked winter medicine cabinet

Many winter illnesses can be treated at home with basic medicine, so make sure you have in a supply of items such as:

- Painkillers like paracetamol, ibuprofen and aspirin to reduce aches, pains and high temperatures
- Anti-histamines can help with allergies and runny noses.
- Indigestion remedy for heartburn, indigestion and trapped wind.
- Mild laxative like senna for constipation or anti-diarrhoeal treatments to help stop diarrhoea.
- Throat lozenges or sprays.
- Cough mixture to help relieve dry coughs.

Remember antibiotics don't kill viruses so they won't help if you have a cold or the flu.

2. Use your local pharmacy

Everyone can get advice from their local pharmacist and buy medicine for a minor ailment or illness. You don't need to make an appointment and many are open when your GP surgery is shut (evenings, weekends and on public holidays). The NHS Minor Ailment Service is for people who don't pay prescription charges and it means that your pharmacist can give you a medicine for a minor ailment or illness. You won't have to make an appointment with your GP or pay for the medicine.

Food is your personal energy supply. Eat well and try to have at least one hot meal a day



3. Make sure you have your repeat prescription

If you take medicines regularly on prescription, make sure you have enough to tide you over if you can't get out. Make sure you order and collect your repeat prescription in plenty of time so you don't run out!

If you run out of your medicine and your GP surgery isn't open then contact your local pharmacy (not NHS 24). Your local pharmacist can, in certain circumstances, provide you with a supply of your regular repeat medication. This is at the discretion of the pharmacist, should only be in one off situations and does not apply to some medicines.

4. Know when your GP surgery will be open

Most GP surgeries are shut from 6pm on Friday night until 8am on Monday morning. GP surgeries are also closed on public holidays. Make sure you find when your GP will be open over the holiday period.

5. Keep your spirits up

It's easy to feel down when days are short and it can be dark by 4pm. So try to keep to your usual routines and if you can't visit friends, make sure you phone them regularly for a chat. It helps to try and do something you enjoy every day. If you feel down for several weeks and it's stopping you going out, making you feel listless and lacking in energy, you might want to share these feelings with your GP.

6. Have a flu jab

If you are 65 or over or are under 65 but have a long term condition such as respiratory disease or diabetes that puts you at risk from flu, make sure you have your free flu jab. Don't forget seasonal flu can strike at any time during the winter - so it's never too late to get your jab!

7. Wear the right clothes

Whether outdoors, or at home, always dress warmly - it's better to wear several thin layers rather than a single thick one. If you are out and about, take particular care when it's wet or icy; make sure you wear good waterproof clothing and shoes as your temperature will drop very quickly if you get wet, especially in cold winds. Change wet clothes in a warm place as soon as possible.

Make sure that your winter wardrobe includes good quality thermal underwear, a waterproof coat or jacket, warm socks, gloves, scarves and hats as well as warm dry boots (check that the soles are slip-proof).

8. Eat the right food

Food is your personal energy supply. Eat well and try to have at least one hot meal a day. Have hot drinks regularly during the day - especially just before you go to bed.

9. Try to keep active

Do some simple exercises at home and spread your household chores throughout the day. Moving about improves blood circulation and keeps you warm. If possible, try to get outdoors for a walk and keep in regular contact with your family, friends and neighbours.

Section 3:

Hot tips for the Home

Fires and Heaters

- Have your gas fires, boilers and central heating checked every year.
- Get your chimney swept every year.
- Keep a sensible distance from the fire when keeping warm as your clothes could quite easily catch fire.
- Don't dry your laundry in front of the fire because this is a fire risk.
- Use a fireguard on solid fuel fires and do not overload the grate or bank the fire too high.
- If you have an open fire check the hearth, floor and furnishings for sparks or embers. If using gas or electric fires make sure you switch off at the socket before bedtime.

Nightwear

- Make sure that you have enough bedding and try to keep your bedroom at a comfortable warm temperature.
- Wear warm night clothes and/or thermals and socks in bed. Use a hot water bottle or electric blanket (follow manufacturer's instructions carefully).
- Keep a hot drink in a flask by your bed in case you wake during the night and a torch in case of power cuts.

Electric Blankets

- Always buy blankets new - a second hand blanket may not be safe.
- It is essential to know whether your blanket is designed to be used as an under blanket or over blanket. It must only be used for that purpose.
- Never lie on top of a blanket when it is switched on. Unplug it first otherwise it may overheat and catch fire.
- Never use the blanket if it's wet or creased and never switch it on to dry out.
- Never use a hot water bottle and an electric blanket together.
- Make sure the power is turned off at the wall and the blanket is unplugged when it is not in use.

Smoke and Gas

- You need a smoke alarm on each floor of your home. Test them regularly and keep them free from dust. Change the battery at least once a year.
- Do not plug up air vents in a room while trying to cut down on draughts, as this might cause a build up of dangerous levels of carbon monoxide.
- Heaters that burn gas, coal, oil or wood can give off poisonous carbon monoxide if they are not working properly. Purchase a detector.

If you smell gas, phone the National Grid on 0800 111 999



Damaged electric blankets cause over 5000 house fires a year.

Section 4:

What to do in severe weather

Severe weather conditions can lead to widespread disruption of communication and transport systems, here's some tips on how to prepare for the worst and what to do if it happens.

1. Radio and television

Keep tuned to local stations for updated weather forecasts.

2. Room temperature

If you're home all day, you're not always aware of how cold your room really is so check and maintain a warm heat. Consider purchasing a cold alarm to alert you if the room becomes dangerously cold.

3. Power failures

Make sure you have an emergency kit, which should include a torch and batteries, portable radio and emergency numbers. If you have a mobile phone, keep it close to you!

4. Food and drink

Keep your store-cupboard well stocked, including a supply of bottled water or canned drinks in case you are unable to go out.

5. Burst pipes

Know where to find your stop valve which controls your water supply and make sure you know how to shut it off quickly in an emergency. If you are unable to do this yourself, ask your neighbour, family or friend to help.

6. Local Council

Keep their number handy - your council will have a plan for helping older people in severe weather. Contact them if you require urgent assistance outwith normal office hours.

*“Keep your
store cupboard
well stocked”*



Emergency Contacts

Electricity Power Cuts

Central and Southern Scotland:

Scottish Power: **0845 27 27 999**

North of Scotland

Scottish Hydro Electric:

0800 300 999

Gas Supply Cut or any Gas Emergency

National Grid (formerly Transco):
0800 111 999

Water Emergencies

Scottish Water: **0845 600 8855**

Useful Contacts

Scottish Helpline for Older

People (SHOP): **0845 125 9732**

Opening hours: Mon – Fri 10.00
to 4.00 (7.00 on Tuesdays)

Energy Saving Scotland

Advice Centres: **0800 512 012**

Winter Fuel Payments Helpline:

0845 915 1515

Textphone: **0845 601 5613**

Opening hours:

Mon – Fri 8.30 to 4.30

Citizen's Advice Scotland website:

www.adviceguide.org.uk/scotland

Consumer Direct (for enquiries
about energy companies):

08454 04 05 06

Consumer Focus Scotland:

0141 226 5261

www.consumerfocus-scotland.org.uk

NHS inform: **0800 22 44 88**

Your Own Contacts

Doctor/GP surgery: _____

Doctor's Emergency call out: _____

Gas provider: _____

Electricity provider: _____



***Keep warm and
safe this winter.***



0845 833 0200

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www.agescotland.org.uk



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