

Cold Weather Plan – Key public health self-help messages

Contact your GP or pharmacist if you think you, or someone you care for, might qualify for a free flu jab. There are four flu leaflets; one general, one for pregnancy, one for people with learning disability, and one about children.

Free flu vaccinations are available for those who:

- are aged 65 or older
- are 2, 3 or 4 years old (but not 5 or older) on 31 August
- are children of school years 1 and 2 age
- are primary school-aged children in areas that previously participated in primary school pilots in 2014-15
- are pregnant
- have a serious medical condition such as chronic heart, lung, neurological, liver or kidney disease or diabetes
- have a weakened immune system due to HIV or treatments that suppress the immune system such as chemotherapy
- have had a stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA) or post-polio syndrome
- are living in a long-stay residential care home or other long-stay care facility (not prison or university halls)
- are the main carer for an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if you fall ill.

Keep your home warm, efficiently and safely:

- heating your home to at least 18°C (65°F) in winter poses minimal risk to your health when you are wearing suitable clothing
- get your heating system and cooking appliances checked and keep your home well ventilated
- use your electric blanket as instructed and get it tested every three years. Never use a hot water bottle with an electric blanket
- do not use a gas cooker or oven to heat your home; it is inefficient and there is a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and this can kill
- make sure you have a supply of heating oil or LPG or solid fuel if you are not on mains gas or electricity – to make sure you do not run out in winter.

Keep the warmth in by:

- fitting draught proofing to seal any gaps around windows and doors
- making sure you have loft insulation. And if you have cavity walls, make sure they are insulated too
- insulate your hot water cylinder and pipes
- draw your curtains at dusk to help keep heat generated inside your rooms
- make sure your radiators are not obstructed by furniture or curtains.

Look after yourself:

- food is a vital source of energy and helps to keep your body warm so have plenty of hot food and drinks
- aim to include five daily portions of fruit and vegetables. Tinned and frozen vegetables count toward five a day
- stock up on tinned and frozen foods so you don't have to go out too much when it's cold or icy
- exercise is good for you all year round and it can keep you warm in winter. If possible, try to move around at least once an hour. But remember to speak to your GP before starting any exercise plans
- wear lots of thin layers – clothes made from cotton, wool or fleecy fibres are particularly good and maintain body heat
- wear good-fitting slippers with a good grip indoors and shoes with a good grip outside to prevent trips, slips and falls
- make sure you have spare medication in case you are unable to go out
- Check if you are eligible for inclusion on the priority service register operated by your water and power supplier.

Look after others:

Check on older neighbours or relatives, especially those living alone or who have serious illnesses to make sure they are safe, warm and well.

Get financial support:

There are grants, benefits and sources of advice 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 before winter sets in.