Keeping well and warm
Advice and supports to help you keep well and warm this winter

www.seai.ie
Cold weather can be a problem for anyone, especially if you are older, have a disability or have a long-term illness.

This booklet tells you about the advice and supports available to help you keep well and warm during winter.

You will also find a temperature card in this booklet. Place it in the room in your home where you spend most of your time but keep it away from radiators, fires and cookers. The temperature guide will let you know when to turn up your heating.
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Keeping well and warm

Eating well

Food helps to keep you warm.

- Eat at least one hot meal a day.
- Have plenty of hot drinks throughout the day and one before bedtime.
- Eat fresh fruit and vegetables every day.
- Keep a supply of basic food for the days when you cannot get out to the shops or do not feel like cooking.
- When making dinner, cook some extra food which you can freeze for another meal.
- Tinned or frozen foods and packets of soup are healthy options to keep in stock.

* Tip: Check with your local supermarket to see if it can deliver your groceries.

* Tip: If you have arthritis or limited power in your hands, make sure you have a tin opener which is easy to use.
**Meals on Wheels**

If you are not able to cook for yourself, you may be able to get a hot meal through the Meals on Wheels service. This service is available in lots of areas around the country. Ask your public health nurse or family doctor (GP) for details of your local service. There is a small charge for Meals on Wheels.

There may be alternative meal delivery services in your area. You can find these in the Golden Pages phone directory or by searching the internet. Your local supermarket or restaurant may also deliver meals or prepare them for collection.

**Keeping active**

It is important to keep as active as you can, although this may depend on your fitness level. Moving around helps keep you warm. You can keep active in many ways.

- Spread your household chores throughout the day so you can switch between rest and activity.
- Walk outside whenever you can. If there is snow or ice, make sure you wear shoes or boots which won’t slip and which give you good support. You may need to use ice grips on your shoes or boots. You can get these in many department stores.
- Walk around inside your home.
- If you have difficulty walking or moving your arms and legs, wiggle your fingers and toes while you are sitting.
- Always wear comfortable shoes with good grips to avoid slips, trips and falls. Most broken bones happen from a fall. This is why preventing falls is so important.
Keeping warm

- Keep the rooms you spend most of your time in warm.
- Wear several layers of light clothes instead of one thick layer.
- Wear clothes made from wool, cotton or fleece.
- Keep your head, hands and feet warm and cosy.
- Wear thermal underwear during the winter.
- In very cold weather:
  - put extra blankets or duvets on your bed;
  - wear warm pyjamas or night dress;
  - wear bed socks and a night cap;
  - keep a flask with a hot drink by your bed.
**Keeping your home warm**

Use your heating system sensibly to make sure your home is warm and comfortable, particularly the rooms where you spend most of your time. If you can, set your heating timer to turn on the heating before you get up and turn it off when you go to bed. If you’re not sure how to set the timer, ask a family member or friend to help.

If the temperature falls below 16°C, you could be at risk of hypothermia. Hypothermia is when your body gets too cold to function properly.

- Keep your living room warm throughout the day. Set your heating to 21°C if you are active or 24°C if you are not able to move around.
- Close doors to separate heated areas from unheated areas of your home.
- Don’t open windows if your home is too warm. Instead, turn down your thermostat to lower the heat.
- Draw your curtains early in the evening but don’t let curtains or furniture block heat from radiators.

**Note:** Make sure your air vents are not blocked, especially in rooms where there is a natural gas or oil boiler, solid fuel fire or standalone gas heater. Blocked air vents can allow dangerous levels of a gas called carbon monoxide to build up.
Severe weather

Recent winters in Ireland have been severe with snow, ice and freezing temperatures lasting for several weeks. Here are some tips to help you get through the coming winter safely.

- Listen to the weather forecasts.
- Stay indoors if possible when the weather is bad.
- Be extra careful if you must walk on icy paths or roads.
- Buy salt to put on the footpaths near your home. Salt helps to melt the ice.
- Keep in contact with your friends, family and neighbours.
- Before winter sets in, get your boiler and pipes checked by a qualified plumber and keep their phone number handy in case of heating or plumbing problems. If you use natural gas, always use a Registered Gas Installer.
- Try to keep some money for extra fuel. Or, if you feel you won’t have enough money for heating, contact the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) which can help you plan a budget.
- Buy extra groceries when you do your weekly shopping in case you can’t get back to the shop for a while because of bad weather.

Note: More useful information is available at www.winterready.ie
Health advice

Cold weather can lead to an increase in chest infections such as flu and pneumonia as well as to hypothermia and other health problems.

If you live alone and feel ill, let someone know.

If you must attend hospital for a number of days, ask a nurse to ring a friend or relative to heat your home and get in some food before you are discharged.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia happens when your body temperature drops below the normal range of 35°C to 37°C. Hypothermia is a serious condition and you need to get medical help as soon as possible. Here is what to look out for.

• Not feeling cold, even when the temperature is low
• Drowsiness
• Slurred speech
• Feeling unsteady when moving
• Pale and puffy face
• Feeling confused
• Cold skin in areas normally covered by clothing, for example, tummy or armpits

If you are at all concerned about hypothermia, then don’t hesitate to contact your GP.
What to do if you find someone who may have hypothermia

• Get medical help immediately. It can be a dangerous shock to the system if you try to warm them up yourself without medical supervision.

• If the person is outside, try to get them indoors. Cover them in blankets to slowly bring their temperature up. If they are wet, remove their wet clothing and dress them in dry clothes. If they are conscious and can swallow, give them warm (not hot), sweet, weak tea to drink.

• Do not give alcohol to drink and do not use hot water bottles or heaters to warm them. People with hypothermia are at risk of having a heart attack, so it is important to handle them carefully.

• If you cannot get the person indoors, cover the person’s head and neck and, if you can, place something underneath them to insulate them from the cold ground. Warm them slowly, using your own body heat if necessary.
**Flu injection**

The best time to get your flu injection is in September or October. Protection lasts for a year, so you should get the flu injection every year. If you have a medical card, the injection is free from your GP. If you do not have a medical card, you may have to pay your GP. Remember, the flu injection does not give you the flu.

**GP out-of-hours services**

This is an **urgent medical service** that doctors and nurses provide outside normal surgery hours.

If you have a medical card or a GP visit card, the service is free. If you don’t have a card, the doctor will charge a fee for the visit. However, you don’t have to pay for medical advice that nurses or doctors give over the phone.

Call the HSE Information Line **1850 24 1850** to find the opening hours and phone number for the GP out-of-hours service in your area.

**Medical equipment**

If you depend on medical equipment at home such as kidney dialysis or oxygen machines, make sure to tell your electricity supplier. Your electricity supplier will put you on the Special Services Register*. This means that if there is a power cut, they will know about your situation and will try to restore your electricity as quickly as possible.

* Gas and electricity suppliers keep a list of their customers who are dependent on home electrical medical equipment or have other special requirements. This list is referred to as the Special Services Register.
Free Home Energy Upgrades for Eligible Homes

If you cannot afford to keep your home warm and comfortable or to pay your fuel and electricity bills, you may be eligible for a free home energy upgrade through SEAI. This nationwide scheme delivers free energy efficiency improvements to the homes of people who are in receipt of certain welfare payments.

You may be eligible if:

- you own and live in your own home;
- your home was built before 2006; and
- you are in receipt of one of the following:
  - Fuel Allowance (part of the National Fuel Scheme);
  - Working Family Payment;
  - Job Seekers Allowance for over six months and have a child under seven years of age;
  - One-Parent Family Payment;
  - Domiciliary Care Allowance; or
  - Carers Allowance and live with the person you are caring for

Upgrades may include:

- attic insulation
- wall insulation
- high efficiency heating systems
- replacement windows
- lagging jackets for hot water tanks
- draught proofing
- low energy light bulbs

Energy advice is also provided as part of this service.

SEAI is responsible for the delivery of the home energy upgrades. SEAI assesses what upgrades each home requires. We then manage the delivery of those upgrades, to our high quality standards, through our panel of experienced contractors.

For more information, visit www.seai.ie/homeenergygrants or freephone **1800 250 204**.

**Please Note:** The measures and eligibility criteria are correct at time of print and are subject to change.
Home Energy Grants

SEAI have grants that can help make your home warmer, cheaper to run, and cut your greenhouse gas emissions. SEAI offer grants to install insulation, upgrade your heating system or install solar energy systems for electricity or hot water. These grants range in amounts from €400 to €6,000 and typically cover around a third of the cost of the works in an average home.

Eligibility Criteria

Your house was built and occupied before 2006 for all insulation and heating control upgrades and before 2011 for heat pumps, solar hot water and solar electricity. The grants are open to previous applicants who want to get additional work done.

How to apply?

For insulation, upgrading your heating system and solar hot water, the first step is to select a SEAI registered contractor who will do the work for you. Then you can apply for the grant online or by post. You must get approval before starting any work. Once approved, you have six months to get the works completed and claim the grant.

For solar electricity, check if you are eligible on the SEAI website. Make sure you use a registered solar PV installer. Then, you can claim the grant after the work is complete.

For more information, visit www.seai.ie/homeenergygrants or call 01 808 2100.
## What grants are available?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Energy Efficient Works</th>
<th>Grant Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attic</td>
<td>€400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall – Cavity</td>
<td>€400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall – Internal Dry Lining</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartment (any) or Mid-terrace House</td>
<td>€1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-detached or End of Terrace</td>
<td>€2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detached House</td>
<td>€2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall – External</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartment (any) or Mid-terrace House</td>
<td>€2,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-detached or End of Terrace</td>
<td>€4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detached House</td>
<td>€6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heating Controls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heating Controls Upgrade</td>
<td>€700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar Water Heating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar Water Heating</td>
<td>€1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat Pump Systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air to Water</td>
<td>€3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground Source to Water</td>
<td>€3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhaust Air to Water</td>
<td>€3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water to Water</td>
<td>€3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air to Air</td>
<td>€600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus Grant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For 3rd measure</td>
<td>€300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For 4th measure</td>
<td>€100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Energy Rating (BER)</td>
<td>€50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Grant amounts accurate at time of going to print.*

*To confirm the latest grant amounts visit www.seai.ie.*
Housing aid for older people

This scheme helps older people to have essential repairs or improvements carried out on their homes. Funding is available for:

- structural repairs or improvements;
- re-wiring;
- repairing or replacing windows and doors;
- installing central heating, insulation, water and sanitary services such as toilets, sinks and showers;
- contract-cleaning and painting;
- dealing with radon gas; and
- other necessary improvement works.

The particular grant you may receive depends on your household income.

For more information or to apply for the scheme, please contact your local authority directly.

Power cuts

Keep a torch beside your bed and in your living room in case of power cuts. Check the batteries regularly.

You can call ESB Networks on 1850 372 999 to find out when your electricity will be restored. Call Gas Networks Ireland on 1850 200 694 to see when your natural gas may be restored.
Save money on your energy bills

- There are many different gas and electricity companies operating in Ireland. It is a good idea to shop around for the best value.

- Use the timers on your heating and your immersion to control when the heating comes on and goes off. This will give you heat and hot water when and where you want it.

- Close doors to rooms that are not used very often and turn radiators down or off so you only heat the area you are using.

- Prevent heat from escaping. Find the source of cold draughts and plug the gaps. Windows and doors are good places to start. Use draught excluders to eliminate draughts around doors, windows and skirting boards.

- Never block wall ventilators as they are essential for good air quality in your home.

- If you have central heating, get your boiler serviced every year. This will maintain your boiler’s efficiency and could save you up to €150 over a year.

- Replace your old cylinder lagging jacket with a high quality one to keep the water hotter for longer.

- If you’re buying a new room heater, choose one with a thermostat as it costs less to run. A thermostat responds to changes in temperature and keeps the room at a comfortable temperature.
Energy saving tips

• Make sure electronics are turned off or unplugged when not in use. Try plugging electronics into a power strip. This makes it easier cut power to all the devices at once, and you can easily push the switch off with your foot rather than reaching down or behind bulky furniture to do so.

• If you are buying new appliances such as fridges, washing machines or dishwashers, choose A-rated appliances, as these cost less to run.

• Use the microwave and toaster oven for smaller meals. These appliances use a lot less energy than the stove or oven. Or try making a double batch of your favorite dishes then freeze the leftovers in individual portions. This saves cooking energy and time.

• Only fill the kettle with as much water as you will need.

• When the time comes to replace your light bulbs, get LED lights. Traditional light bulbs are incredibly wasteful as most of the electricity they use produces heat rather than light!

• Install motion sensor lights. Lights come on when you enter a room and automatically turn off when you leave, saving you energy if you ever forget to turn off the lights. Motion sensor lights are perfect for stairways, hallways and closets where the light switch may not be so handy.
## What can one unit of electricity buy you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appliance</th>
<th>Minutes per unit of electricity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instantaneous electrical shower Immersion water heater</td>
<td>7 – 10 mins 15 – 20 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooker (1 large ring) Kettle Tumble Dryer</td>
<td>20 – 40 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toaster (2 slice)</td>
<td>40 – 60 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing machine Dishwasher</td>
<td>70 – 100 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desktop computer (including monitor) TV 28” (71cm)</td>
<td>4 – 6 hours 7 – 9 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 watt ordinary light bulb 20 watt energy saving (CFL) light bulb</td>
<td>10 hours 50 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table indicates how long each appliance will run for on one unit of electricity. These figures give an average usage guide. Actual usage will depend on the age and efficiency of appliances.
Financial and other support services

Household Benefits Package

This package helps households with the costs of electricity, natural gas or bottled gas bills.

The electricity allowance covers the standing charge, a certain number of electricity units and value added tax (VAT). Depending on your supplier, this may be paid directly to you as a cash allowance or taken directly off your electricity bill.

The natural gas allowance covers a range of charges and gas energy units depending on your particular supplier.

You can get a bottled gas allowance if your home is not connected to an electricity or natural gas supply.

The Household Benefits Package also pays your television licence.

For more information on the Household Benefits Package or to see if you are eligible call the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection on LoCall 1890 500 000 or visit www.welfare.ie.
**Fuel Allowance**

If you are on a long-term social welfare payment, you may be eligible for the Fuel Allowance under the National Fuel Scheme. This is a payment to help with the cost of heating your home. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection operates this scheme. The Fuel Allowance is a means tested scheme and the eligibility criteria for the Fuel allowance are different from the eligibility criteria for the Household Benefits Package.

A household is only eligible for one Fuel Allowance.

To find out more about the Fuel Allowance and to see if you are eligible, visit [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie).
Home safety

- If you have an open fire, always use a fire guard.
- Do not hang clothes near a fire.
- If you have an electric blanket always switch it off before you get into bed.
- Never fill a hot water bottle with boiling water and make sure you use a cover with the hot water bottle.
- Never use a hot water bottle with an electric blanket.
- Never smoke in bed.
- Leave a low energy light on overnight in the hall, landing or stairs in case you need to get up during the night.
- Make sure your air vents are not blocked, especially in rooms where there is a natural gas or oil boiler, solid fuel or standalone gas heater. Blocked air vents can allow dangerous levels of a gas called carbon monoxide to build up.
- Think about installing a carbon monoxide alarm near the fire or boiler. Carbon monoxide alarms should be installed as recommended by the manufacturers.
- Have your boiler serviced every year to keep it working safely. If you use natural gas, always use a registered gas installer.
Smoke alarms

Make sure you fit smoke alarms where they can be heard clearly. If you live in a two-storey house, you need smoke alarms both upstairs and downstairs. Use alarms which have both a sound and light signal. Get a friend or family member to test the alarm batteries regularly.

Home security

- Never let strangers into your home. Ask for identification first. If you are not sure, do not let them in.
- Do not employ workers who call uninvited to your door.
- Do not keep large amounts of money at home.
- Fit timer switches to your lighting and think about installing extra security lighting.
SEAI kindly acknowledges the contribution of the following: