



# A guide to keeping warm and well this winter

- Financial supports and useful services • Energy saving tips
- Health advice • Safety and security tips

This guide is particularly useful for older people,  
people who care for others and people with disabilities



# Stay warm and well this winter

Read this guide to find out who can help you if you have concerns, such as difficulty paying your electricity or gas bills.

Some customers are protected from disconnections due to non-payment of bills. (See page 10.) If you are late paying energy bills, read page 14 and know that it is a good idea to contact your energy providers to see if you can work out some sort of repayment plan over a longer period (if needed).

Stay warm and well.



## About this guide

Winter can be a hard time for anyone. It is especially hard if:

- you are 65 years or older,
- you have a disability,
- you have a long-term illness,
- you are caring for others, for children or those who have additional needs,
- you live in a home built before 1990.

This guide gives you information and advice about:

- the supports available to help you keep warm and well during winter,
- other services that can help you manage bills or debts,
- reducing your bills, and
- staying safe and secure in your home.

Your health is very important. Make sure you do not stop using the appliances you need to keep yourself warm and well.

We include some handy tips to reduce your energy bills without affecting your health on page 18 of this guide.

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

## About SEAI

SEAI is Ireland's national energy authority investing in, and delivering, appropriate, effective, and sustainable solutions to help Ireland's transition to a clean-energy future. We work with Government, homeowners, businesses, and communities to achieve this, through expertise, funding, educational programmes, policy advice, research, and the development of new technologies.

SEAI is funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

[www.seai.ie](http://www.seai.ie)

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# Financial supports

## Household Benefits Package

This package helps households with the costs of electricity or gas bills. It also provides a free television licence.

Only one Household Benefits Package is payable for each household.

For more information on the Household Benefits Package or to see if you are eligible:

- visit our website [www.gov.ie/householdpackage](http://www.gov.ie/householdpackage)
- visit [www.MyWelfare.ie](http://www.MyWelfare.ie)  
The quickest and easiest way to apply for this payment is online at [www.MyWelfare.ie](http://www.MyWelfare.ie) if you have a MyGovID account. You can set up an account at [www.mygovid.ie](http://www.mygovid.ie). If you are unable to apply online, you can also download a form from [gov.ie/householdpackage](http://gov.ie/householdpackage)
- phone 0818 200 400  
or  
071 9157100

## Fuel Allowance

The Fuel Allowance is a payment to help with the cost of heating your home during the winter months.

The Fuel Allowance is means tested, which means that the Department of Social Protection (DSP) assesses your income to see if you qualify.

In Budget 2023, the Government widened the eligibility criteria for the Fuel Allowance. This means that people may now qualify for Fuel Allowance who were not eligible for it before.

From January 2023, people aged 70 and over may qualify for Fuel Allowance as long as their weekly income (which includes their State Pension) is not above €500 per week for a single person and €1,000 per week for a couple. They do not need to be getting a qualifying social welfare payment. They still need to meet the other eligibility criteria.

In addition, for people aged 70 or over, the amount of capital (savings and investments) that is disregarded (not considered) in the means test for Fuel Allowance increased from €20,000 to €50,000.



From January 2023, for people aged under 70, the weekly allowable income limit increased by €80, from €120 to €200; and Disablement Benefit and half-rate carers payments are disregarded from the means assessment. This means more of these carers may qualify for fuel allowance.

## How to apply

You can now apply for the Fuel Allowance online at [www.mywelfare.ie](http://www.mywelfare.ie). This is the quickest and easiest way to apply. If you can't apply online, you can also download a form from [gov.ie/fuelallowance](http://gov.ie/fuelallowance) and post your completed form to the address on the form.

To find out more about the Fuel Allowance and to see if you are eligible, you can:

visit the website: [gov.ie/fuelallowance](http://gov.ie/fuelallowance)  
phone 0818 200 400  
or  
071 9157100

## Additional Needs Payments

You can get an Additional Needs Payment to help you with an expense that you cannot pay from your weekly income. These can include:

- an increase in your fuel or electricity costs,
- essential repairs to your property, and
- replacing household appliances and furniture.

This is not a complete list, as other expenses can also be covered.

## Did you know?

The Additional Needs Payment does not cover non-essential household or personal expenses.

The Department of Social Protection will take the following into account as part of your application:

- your weekly household income,
- your savings and investments,
- your household expenses, and
- the type of assistance you need.

## How to apply

You can post your application for an Additional Needs Payment or make an appointment with your local Community Welfare Officer if you prefer. If you post your application, the Community Welfare Officer may approve and send you a payment or arrange an appointment to meet with you.

You can download and fill in the application form for an Additional Needs Payment online and send it to your local Community Welfare Service. You can also get an application form at your local Community Welfare Office and fill it in there.

Email [cwsforms@welfare.ie](mailto:cwsforms@welfare.ie) and get a form posted to you.

For general information about the Community Welfare Service and application forms, phone: 0818 60 70 80.

## Like some help applying for Fuel Allowance and Additional Needs Payment?

If you are 60 or over and are worried about energy bills or are experiencing other difficulties this winter, you can get in contact with ALONE (a national organisation that enables older people to age at home).

ALONE can also support you if you are unsure of what you may be entitled to and can help to link you in with Government supports such as Fuel Allowance and Additional Needs Payments.

You can call ALONE from 8am-8pm seven days per week.

Phone: 0818 222 024.



## Later disconnection dates for non-payment of bills

The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) is Ireland's independent energy and water regulator and has delayed energy disconnections.

### All domestic customers:

If bills are unpaid, you will not be at risk of disconnection from your gas or electricity.

### Vulnerable customers:

If bills are unpaid, you will not be at risk of disconnection from your gas or electricity.

Important: Vulnerable customers registered as being critically dependent on electrically powered assistive devices will never be disconnected if they do not pay their bills.

## How to register as a vulnerable customer

Contact your energy provider to learn how to register as a vulnerable customer. They will explain which register you can join (Priority or Special Services Register).

Examples of customers who should register could include:

- Deaf or hard of hearing customers
- Customers aged 66 years or over who live alone and/or live with minors or others aged 66 or over
- Blind or partially sighted customers
- Customers with mobility difficulties
- Customers with language and literacy difficulties
- Customers whose speech is impaired
- People with learning difficulties
- People with mental health issues
- People with dexterity difficulties such as issues using their hands

## SEAI Home Energy Upgrade grants

SEAI offers three routes to getting a home energy upgrade to suit different circumstances and budgets.

### • Fully funded energy upgrade:

SEAI offers energy upgrades to qualifying homeowners receiving certain welfare payments. If you qualify for the scheme, we can help to make your home warmer, healthier, and cheaper to run.

### • Individual energy upgrades:

For homeowners looking to do only one or two energy upgrades, or who want to do works over a period of

time, there are individual energy upgrade grants available. This grant route is not means tested but some eligibility criteria apply.

- **One Stop Shop service:** The One Stop Shop service is for homeowners who have a BER rating of B3 or lower and who wish to carry out multiple energy upgrades in one go. With this route, you would be looking to do a complete home energy upgrade to bring your house to a BER rating of B2 or better. This grant route is not means tested but some eligibility criteria apply.



## Individual energy upgrade grants

Selection of individual grants for home energy upgrades such as attic and wall insulation

Part funded by SEAI

Suitable for homeowners and private landlords (non-corporate) who want:

- individual energy upgrades
- to manage their own project
- to apply for the grant themselves
- to pay for full cost of works and claim grant afterwards

Homeowners manage their upgrade including:

- contractor selection
- grant application
- contractor works
- follow up BER\*

- For homes built and occupied before 2011: insulation and heating controls upgrades are available

For homes built and occupied before 2021: heat pumps and renewable systems are available

- For all homeowners and private landlords (non-corporate)

## One Stop Shop service

Complete home energy upgrade

Part funded by SEAI

Suitable for homeowners and private landlords (non-corporate) who want:

- multiple energy upgrades
- to upgrade to a minimum B2 BER\*
- a fully managed upgrade including the management of the grant application
- to pay for the works net of eligible grant

• Managed by a One Stop Shop, this service includes:

- assessing your home energy
- grant application
- project management
- contractor works
- follow up BER\*

- For homes built and occupied before 2011

• Homes must complete a minimum level of energy upgrades and achieve a minimum BER rating of B2

- For all homeowners and private landlords (non-corporate)

## Fully-funded energy upgrade

Fully-funded home energy upgrade service for qualifying homeowners

Fully-funded by SEAI

All home upgrade costs covered

Suitable for qualifying homeowners in receipt of certain welfare benefits:

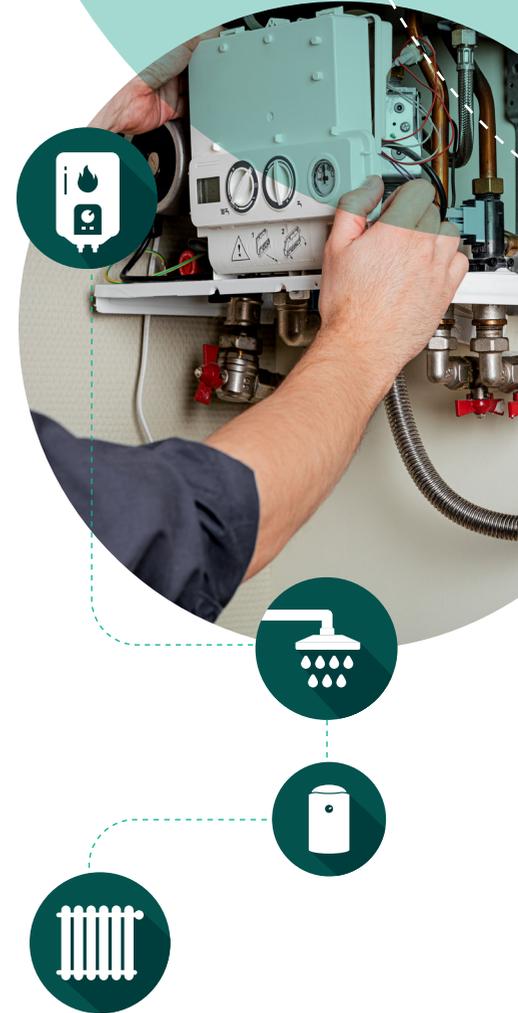
- Fuel Allowance
- Job Seekers Allowance
- Working Family Payment
- One-Parent Family Payment
- Domiciliary Care Allowance
- Carers Allowance
- Disability Allowance

Managed by SEAI, this service includes:

- home survey
- selecting a contractor
- contractor works
- follow up BER\*

This home energy upgrade option is:

- available for older homes, and
- subject to eligibility depending on when the home was built, and
- available for homeowners receiving certain welfare benefits.



**Find out more at [seai.ie/grants](http://seai.ie/grants) or by calling 01 8082100.**

\*BER means Building Energy Rating

## Housing aid for older people

This grant is for people 66 years old or more to do essential repairs, so that they can continue to live in their own home. Sometimes this grant can be paid to people under 66 years old, but only in cases of hardship.

Essential repairs can include:

- repairing or replacing the roof,
- upgrading the electrical wiring,
- repairing or replacing the windows and doors, and
- providing central heating.

For more information on what types of repairs are covered or to apply, please [contact your local authority](#).

## What to do if you can't pay your energy bill

### Contact your energy supplier

If you are finding it hard to pay your electricity or gas bill, you should contact your supplier to agree a payment plan with them.

Your suppliers' staff are trained to deal with your queries with respect. This is a requirement of the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU). The CRU is Ireland's independent energy and water regulator.

Under the Supplier Engage Code, suppliers must arrange practical payment plans to assist domestic customers who are struggling.

- Suppliers will not disconnect you if you stay in contact with them about your bill
- Payment plans must consider your circumstances
- Payment plans must be reasonable, affordable, and must be over a minimum of 24 months if you need them to be
- Suppliers will never disconnect a registered vulnerable customer (see below) if they are in arrears (owe money), or for any reason.

## Vulnerable customers

If you are a registered vulnerable customer, energy suppliers will add you to their Priority Services Register or the Special Services Register. If you are registered on the Priority Services Register, you will never be disconnected from your energy supply. Some customers may qualify to be on both.

You meet the criteria of a vulnerable customer if:

1. You are over 66 years of age, or
2. You have a physical, sensory, intellectual or mental disability, or
3. You are critically dependent on a continued power supply for your health and your life (for example, you may need to use electrically powered equipment).

Customers critically dependent on electrically powered equipment qualify for the Priority Services Register.

Customers who are over 66 years of age, or have a physical, sensory, intellectual or mental disability qualify for the Special Services Register.

We list examples of vulnerable customers on page 10.

## Rely on medical equipment at home? You won't be disconnected for non-payment

If you depend on medical equipment at home such as kidney dialysis or oxygen machines, ensure you tell your electricity supplier and request that you are added to their Priority Services Register.

This means that if there is a power cut, they will know about your situation and will try to restore your power as quickly as possible. It is important to note that if you are registered on the Priority Services Register, you will not be disconnected for non-payment of account, however, a power cut may still occur.



# Other useful services

## ALONE

If you are over the age of 60 and are worried about energy bills or are experiencing other difficulties, you can contact ALONE.

ALONE is a national organisation that helps older people live at home independently. ALONE's work is for all older people and aims to improve physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

You can contact ALONE from 8am–8pm seven days per week by calling 0818 222 024.

## Talk to the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)

Light and heat should be a priority for every household. If you are worried about paying your energy bills, either now or in the future, MABS are available to offer you advice and support.

Their contact details are:

Helpline: 0818 07 2000, the MABS Helpline is open: Monday–Friday, 9am–8pm

Visit their website: [mabs.ie](http://mabs.ie) for local office details

Open: Monday–Friday, 9am–8pm

## CRU – the Commission for Regulation of Utilities

CRU has a customer care team to help you if you have questions about your electricity or gas supplier.

Email: [customer care@cru.ie](mailto:customer care@cru.ie)

Website: [cru.ie](http://cru.ie)



# Energy advice

## How to save money on your heating bills

You should not restrict your energy use in ways that could impact your health this winter. If you are experiencing health difficulties, prioritise keeping your home at a comfortable temperature and use the financial supports available (see page 6) to help you to stay well.

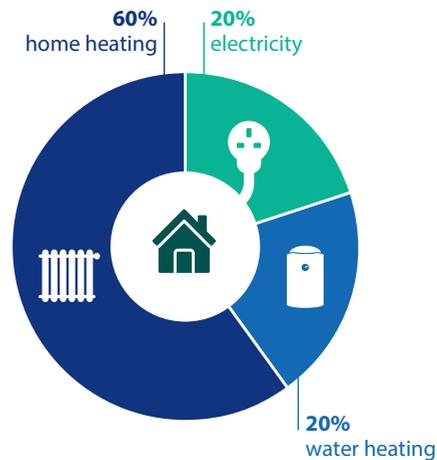
If you are trying to reduce energy use, make sure to do so in areas that won't affect your health. Some items that help you to stay warm and well use very little energy – such as your pendant alarm – and it is important to keep these items switched on.

You can also be smart about your use of appliances that use higher amounts of energy. For example, it is important to drink hot drinks to stay warm and well, but you can make a positive change by boiling only the amount of water you need in the kettle.

## Cost-saving tips

### Heat your rooms sensibly

Think about the appliances in our homes that use the most energy and cost the most money. Heating is the biggest energy user in your home. Heating your rooms and water makes up 80% of your energy bills. There are cost-saving ways to use your heating, and we explain these below.



- Use your heating system sensibly to make sure your home is warm and comfortable, particularly in 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 to turn it off when you go to bed. This will give you heat when and where you want it. If you're not sure how to set the timer, ask a family member, neighbour or friend to help.
- Keep your living room warm throughout the day. Keep your room heating at 24°C if you are not able to move around or between 19–21°C if you are active. If the temperature falls below 16°C and you experience prolonged exposure to the cold, you could be at risk of hypothermia, when your body gets too cold to function properly. See page 25. The temperature in hallways and bedrooms should be cooler, ideally between 15–18°C.

- \* Use the temperature card in this booklet to read the temperature of the room and know when to turn the heating up or down.
- If you have gas central heating, get your boiler serviced by a registered gas installer every year. This will make sure your boiler is working efficiently and could save you up to €150 over a year.

To prevent as much heat escaping from your house as possible:

- Close doors to rooms that are not used very often.
- Prevent heat from escaping. Find the source of cold draughts and plug the gaps. Windows and doors are good places to start.
- Never block wall ventilators as they are essential for good air quality in your home.





## Heating and using hot water

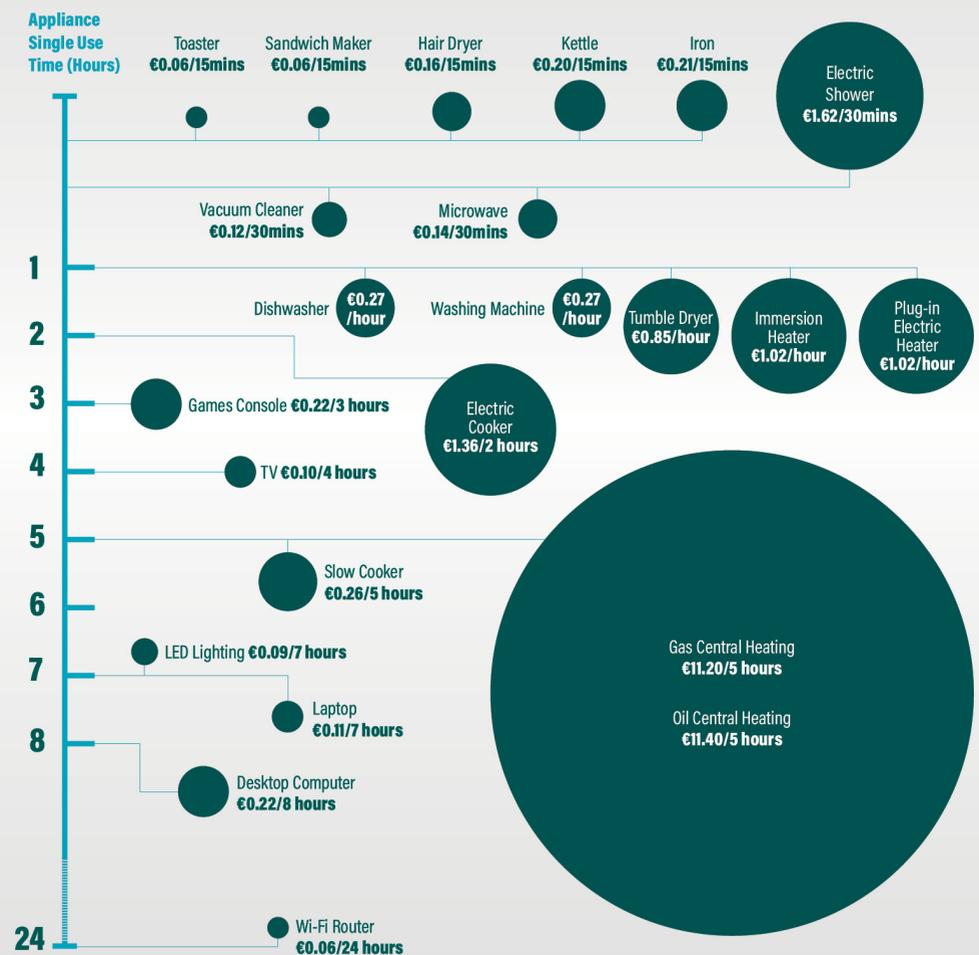
- An electric shower uses only 20% of the energy it takes to heat the water for a full bath. However, electric showers are still one of the biggest energy users in the home. By reducing your shower time, you could save a lot of energy and water.
- Install a timer on your immersion so you can choose what time your water is heated. This will help you to ensure you have hot water only when you need it. If you cannot install a timer at this time, use your phone or alarm clock to remind you to turn the immersion off as it is easy to forget it is on.

- If your water is being heated by a central-heating boiler, get a cylinder thermostat fitted. It will switch the heat supply on and off to ensure water temperature stays within the acceptable range.
- You can contact a home-energy upgrade company to fit these devices.
- Make sure your hot-water cylinder (which is typically found in your hot press) is insulated. Insulate hot-water pipes with foam tubing, especially in unheated areas like the attic. If you have a handy friend, family member or neighbour, they may be able to do this for you. Otherwise, you could contact a handyman. There are lots of sites you can find through a Google search which help you find a local handyman.

# USING LESS SAVES MONEY

This useful graph shows you which appliances use the most energy in your home – the bigger the circle, the more energy the appliance uses.

Reducing how long you use them for can help to cut your bills. But be sure to only reduce your use when it's safe to do so, and stay warm and well this winter. More information on the calculations below can be found at [gov.ie/ReduceYourUse](https://www.gov.ie/ReduceYourUse)



Prices may vary - this is a snapshot in time from data in August to October 2022

Source: Chart adapted from Foley A., Al Kez D., Harrison H. (2022) Queen's University Belfast 'Budgeting for this Winter's Energy Bill in Ireland'.

REDUCE YOUR USE

## How to save money on your electricity bills

To keep your use of electricity as low as possible, you should know which appliances use the most electricity. A good rule of thumb is: if it makes things hot, then it uses a lot of electricity. Some examples are:

- showers
- washing machines
- tumble dryers
- ovens
- kettles

As with heating and hot water, remember to turn things off when they are not in use and use them efficiently when they are on.

- Unplug your appliances when you are not using them. Even in standby mode (when the red light is still on even though the switch is turned off), your appliances are using energy. This adds up over time.
- Switch off all your appliances at night and when you are not home.

There are many different gas and electricity companies operating in Ireland. It is a good idea to shop around for the best value, for example by checking price comparison websites.

## How to use your appliances more efficiently

If you are trying to reduce your energy use, make sure to do so in areas that won't affect your health. Some items that help you to stay warm and well use very little energy (for example, your pendant alarm). It is important to keep these items switched on.

- Use a lower temperature or a shorter washing programme for your washing machine and dishwasher and choose the eco-settings.
- Wait until you have a full load of washing or dishes before turning on the washing machine or the dishwasher.
- Use your microwave, air fryer (if you have one) and toaster for smaller meals. These appliances use a lot less energy than the stove or oven.

- Make a large batch of your favourite dishes and freeze the extra portions. This saves cooking energy and time.
- Only boil as much water as you need in the kettle.
- Don't leave the fridge door open for too long while getting food. It takes a lot of effort for the fridge to cool down to its original temperature afterwards.
- Buy the highest A-rating possible appliances you can afford when replacing home appliances. A higher rated appliance will be cheaper to run over its lifetime.



# Health advice

Cold weather can lead to an increase in health problems such as chest infections. If you live alone and feel ill, let someone know. If you must be in 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. If you are aged 60 or over, you can also call ALONE on 0818 222 024 to support you with discharge from hospital.

Cold weather can be a risk to your health if you have a cardiovascular or heart condition (such as heart disease); have a respiratory or lung condition (such as asthma); or have dementia. If you have any of these conditions or other illnesses that may put you at risk, prioritise staying warm and well this winter.

If you live alone and feel ill, let someone know or contact your GP or the ambulance service.

## 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.
- Wear thermal underwear during the winter.

## Sleeping in very cold weather

- Use a hot-water bottle (only if you don't have an electric blanket).
- Put extra blankets or duvets on your bed.
- Wear warm night clothes, for example long-sleeved pyjamas, and socks.
- Keep a flask with a hot drink on your bedside table.

## Hypothermia

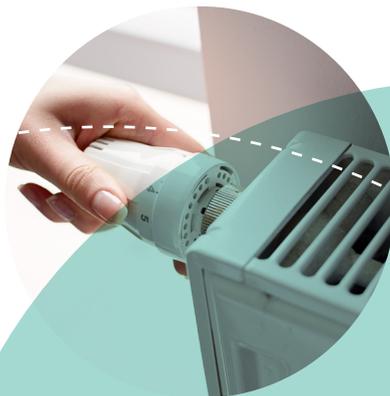
Hypothermia happens when your body temperature drops below the normal range of 35°C–37°C. Hypothermia is a serious condition and you need to get medical help as soon as possible. Here is what to look out for.

- 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 think you might have hypothermia, you should contact your GP, Public nurse or GP out-of-hours straight away. As last resort, you can call 112 for advice if you cannot reach any of the above medical professionals or family or community supports.

## What to do if you find someone who may have hypothermia

- Call emergency services and get medical help immediately.
- If the person is outside, try to get them indoors. Cover them in blankets to slowly bring their temperature up.
- If the person's clothes are wet, remove the wet clothing and dress them in dry clothes.
- If the person is conscious and can swallow, give them warm (not hot), sweet, weak tea to drink.
- Do not give the person alcohol 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 not to give them a shock.
- 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.



## COVID-19

COVID-19 is still with us and we all still need to act to care together for each other. This is a collective response. If you have COVID-19, you need to stay at home for 5 days and avoid contact with other people, especially people at higher risk from COVID-19.

Refer to the [HSE website](#) for current guidelines.

The following public health advice is still important:

- wearing a mask on public transport
- wearing a mask in healthcare settings in line with national guidance
- continuing to try and prevent infection in early learning settings (such as school-aged childcare and schools) by following hygiene measures and advice to stay at home if you, your partner or your child or grandchild has symptoms of COVID-19.

## Flu injection and vaccines

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. The injection is free from your GP for people over 65 and for people with certain health conditions and if you have a medical card. 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.

Make sure you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines and follow HSE health advice.

## Flu Vaccination programme

The seasonal flu vaccination programme runs from October to April each year. People aged 65 and over, children aged from 2 to 17 years and others with certain health conditions are eligible to receive the flu vaccine free of charge from GPs and pharmacists. It takes 2 weeks for the vaccine to work.

The flu vaccine will be administered with the COVID-19 booster where possible, in line with advice.

The best way to protect yourself and your families from flu and COVID-19 is to get your vaccines. More information is available from Getting the flu vaccine – [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

## 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 1800 700 700 or 01 240 8787 to find the opening hours and phone number for the GP out-of-hours service in your area.



## 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 go to the shop or do not feel like cooking.
- When making dinner, cook some extra food which you can freeze for another meal.
- Keep tinned or frozen foods and packets of soup are healthy options in stock.
- Check with your local supermarket to see if it can deliver your groceries or ask family, a neighbour or a friend to help with shopping.
- 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 GP for details of your local service. There is a small charge for Meals on Wheels. The cost of a meal ranges between €4 and €6 depending on the provider and what you get in a meal.

There may be alternative meal delivery services in your area. You can find these by searching the internet. If you are over 60 years of age, you can also call ALONE on 0818 222 024 for information or to help you to link in with Meals on Wheels.

You can also get ready-meals from the supermarket or your local take-away.



## 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.
- 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.
- Walk outside when you can and when weather conditions permit you to do so comfortably. If there is snow or ice, make sure you wear shoes or boots with a good grip and strong support. You may need to use ice grips on your shoes or boots, which you can buy 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.

## Like a free exercise guide?

Get Up, Get Dressed, Get Moving, ALONE, Siel Bleu Ireland, and Age and Opportunity have developed an at-home exercise guide suitable for everyone.

This guide is available on the ALONE website, [www.alone.ie](http://www.alone.ie). ALONE can post you a copy of this guide if you like or you can call ALONE on 0818 222 024 and they will send it to you.



# Safety and security

## Home safety

### What to do

- Leave a low energy light on overnight in the hall, landing or stairs in case you need to get up during the night.
- Install smoke alarms (see page 31) in your home.
- Have your boiler serviced every year to keep it working safely. If you use natural gas, always use a registered gas installer. You can find a list of registered installers here <https://rgii.ie/registered-installers/>
- Switch off and unplug all your appliances before you go to bed.
- Always use a fire guard in front of an open fire.
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm in every room that has a fuel-burning appliance (see page 31). Some registered gas installers will supply and fit carbon monoxide alarms in addition to servicing your appliances. If fitting the alarm yourself, follow the manufacturer's instructions.

- To be safe from carbon monoxide (a poisonous gas), do not the run generators, or any other petrol or diesel equipment indoors, under cover, or close to access points in your property, such as doors, windows, or ventilation points.

If your electricity has been cut off, you might be tempted to find alternative means of cooking and heating. However, you should never use barbeques, patio heaters or other outdoor fuel burning equipment indoors, or under cover. These appliances can produce large amounts of carbon monoxide and should only ever be used outdoors in a well-ventilated area. Similarly, you should never use an indoor cooking appliance to try and heat a room.



### What not to do

- ✗ Never hang clothes near a fire.
- ✗ Never leave an electric blanket on in bed. Always switch it off before you get into bed.
- ✗ Never fill a hot-water bottle with boiling water. Make sure there is a cover on your hot-water bottle.
- ✗ Never use a hot-water bottle with an electric blanket.
- ✗ Never smoke in bed.
- ✗ Never block your air vents, 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 carbon monoxide to build up.
- ✗ Never leave devices (such as your mobile phone) charging overnight as this can be a fire hazard.

## Smoke and carbon monoxide 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, family member or neighbor to test the alarm batteries regularly.
- Think about installing a carbon monoxide alarm in every room that has a fuel-burning appliance. These alarms are available in most hardware or DIY shops and some larger supermarkets. Basic models usually cost between €20 and €30. Please see [www.carbonmonoxide.ie](http://www.carbonmonoxide.ie) for more information on carbon monoxide alarms.

## 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.
- Ask a family member or trusted friend or neighbour to keep an eye on your home if you are going away for a few weeks.

## Severe weather

Here are some tips to help you get through the winter safely.

- 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. You can find a link to a list of registered installers on page 33.

- 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.
- Listen to the weather forecasts.
- Stay indoors if possible when the weather is bad.
- Be extra careful if you need to 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.
- Make sure you have credit on your mobile phone.
- Try to keep some money for extra fuel. If you are worried you don't have enough money for heating, contact the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) to help you plan a budget. Make sure you are registered for all supports available to you. For example, registering as vulnerable with your supplier and applying for fuel allowance and so on.

**Note: More information is available at [www.winterready.ie](http://www.winterready.ie)**

## Power cuts

Keep a torch beside your bed and in your living room in case of power cuts. Check the batteries regularly. Make sure your phone is fully charged, but don't charge it overnight as this can be a fire hazard.

## Gas appliances if your electricity goes out

During a power outage, gas supplies and gas meters should continue to operate as normal.

Gas appliances, however, may be affected. Most gas appliances rely on mains electricity to power pumps, fans, and electronic controls. This means that they may not operate until electricity is restored.

Boilers and other appliances should close down safely, and there should be no smell of gas. If you do smell gas, call the Gas Networks Ireland 24-Hour Emergency Service on 1800 20 50 50 immediately.

When electricity is restored, gas appliances should operate as normal, but some boilers may need to be reset. This can normally be done by customers using the boiler control panel. Some boilers will have the resetting instructions on the boiler. If your boiler or other appliances are not working after electricity has been restored and cannot be reset, please contact a Registered Gas Installer. Details of these can be found on <https://rgii.ie/>

**You can call ESB Networks on 1850 372 999 to find out when your electricity will be restored. You can find more details at [www.esbnetworks.ie/power-outages](http://www.esbnetworks.ie/power-outages)**

Call Gas Networks Ireland on 1800 464 464 to see when your natural gas may be restored. You can find more details at [www.gasnetworks.ie](http://www.gasnetworks.ie).





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2040

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