

Cold Weather Advice from Hampshire County Council

Cold weather advice

There is some simple advice available to help people to avoid suffering the ill-effects from the cold:

Get your flu jab if you:

- are aged 65 or older.
- 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.
- Contact your GP or pharmacist if you think you, or someone you care for, might qualify for a free flu jab.

Keep your home warm, efficiently and safely:

- heating your home to at least 18°C (65°F) is beneficial to all, but particularly important for people aged 65 years and over or with pre-existing medical conditions. Above this and you may waste money; below this you may risk your health. This will keep your home warm and may lower your bills.
- Recommendation to reduce Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) to heat children's bedrooms to between 16°C to 20°C (61 – 68F).
- if you can't heat all the rooms you use, heat the living room during the day and your bedroom just before you go to bed.
- 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.
- switch your appliances (such as TVs and microwaves) off rather than leaving them on standby.
- 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.

Practical help or advice on keeping your home warm, is available from Hampshire County Council's Hitting the Cold Spots Project Helpline on 0800 804 8601.

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 your 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

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