



**Independent
Age**



Winterwise

**A guide to keeping
well this winter**



In collaboration with

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Thank you

We would like to thank those who shared their experiences as this guide was being developed, and those who reviewed it for us. Our special thanks go to Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Ageing Hub for their collaboration during this review. To find out more visit greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk.

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The sources used to create this publication are available on request.

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Introduction

“ This winter with the rise in cost of living, it’s even more important that we look after ourselves and each other. That’s why we’ve produced this guide with Independent Age so that older people in Greater Manchester have the information to help keep warm, well and safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Burnham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andy Burnham,
Mayor of Greater
Manchester

“ Older people in Greater Manchester, especially those on fixed incomes, need to know the facts and what help is out there. The cost of living crisis touches all aspects of our lives – health, home, food, energy. By following this guide, we can help ourselves, our friends and neighbours.”

Bhim Virmani,
Manchester

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We spoke to older people about their experiences. Their quotes appear throughout. We have changed the names of some of the interviewees who wished to be anonymous. Some of the images seen throughout this guide are posed by friends of Independent Age.

The PIF TICK is the UK-wide Quality Mark for Health Information.

About this guide

Winter may make it more challenging for us to stay well. As the days get shorter and colder, it's normal to go out less. We're all more likely to catch colds or flu, and generally feel a bit down. This winter might feel especially challenging because the cost of living is going up. But, by thinking ahead and planning, we can take care of ourselves and help each other in the coming months.

This guide has tips on how to keep well over winter. We have split it into three sections: Staying warm, Staying safe and Staying well.



You can use our checklists to plan for winter, too. We have checklists on **Winter benefits**, **Preparing for winter** and **Staying well during winter**. Find them at independentage.org/staying-well-in-winter, or call our Helpline on **0800 319 6789** to ask for a copy.

In this guide, you'll find references to our other free publications. You can order them by calling **0800 319 6789**, or by visiting independentage.org/publications.



1. Staying warm

Keeping yourself and your home warm will be a priority this winter. This section outlines how to stay in control of your money and get the support you're entitled to.

1. Staying warm



Important

There is support available if you need help getting essentials, like food, and heating your home this winter. See **page 48** for information about where to get food for free, and **page 14** for how to get extra money towards your bills. It is worth talking to your energy supplier, too. A lot of them have grants for people who need them (**page 24**).

Managing your costs

As the cost of living continues to change, you might want to try to control how much energy you use, or estimate the costs. As a rough guide, this chart shows the relative energy use of different appliances.

The oven and electric hob use the most energy, so you might want to be careful about how you use them. A slow cooker uses the least energy to cook a warm meal, so think about using it more than the hob. Don't be put off using your kettle to make warm drinks, just avoid overfilling it. A lightbulb uses the least energy, and costs less than a penny an hour to run.

Relative energy use of appliances

Appliances using the most energy

- Oven
 - Kettle
 - Electric hob
-

Appliances using a moderate amount of energy

- Vacuum cleaner
 - Microwave
 - Toaster
 - Dishwasher
-

Appliances using the least energy

- Washing machine
- Slow cooker
- Electric blanket
- TV
- Fridge
- Lightbulb



Good to know

For advice on how to make your home more energy efficient (for example, by increasing your loft or wall insulation), visit [gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency](https://www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency) or call **0800 444 202**. In Scotland, contact Home Energy Scotland (**0808 808 2282**, [homeenergyscotland.org](https://www.homeenergyscotland.org)).

1. Staying warm

Keeping yourself warm

Check the thermostat

Being cold isn't just uncomfortable – it can also be very bad for your health. Low temperatures increase the risk of flu, as well as a heart attack, a stroke or hypothermia. Heat your home to at least 18°C (64°F) during the day and night. Turn up your thermostat if you feel cold.



Check your boiler

Get your boiler serviced every year. It's best to do this ahead of winter, to make sure it doesn't break down when you need it most.

To find a gas engineer, contact the Gas Safe Register (**0800 408 5500**, gassaferegister.co.uk). If you rent, check if your landlord has arranged this.

It is also important to service your boiler regularly to avoid problems with carbon monoxide.

See **page 28** for more information.

Keep warm at night

A hot water bottle or electric blanket can warm up your bed. Never use both together, as this can be dangerous.

Layering clothes and blankets will keep you warmer, because it traps air between the layers.

If you are using an electric blanket, check whether you can keep your blanket on all night or should switch it off before you get into bed.

Get your blanket checked every three years by an expert. Ask about this at the shop where you bought it or contact your local council's trading standards department – they may even run free testing days. If your blanket is more than 10 years old, think about replacing it.

1. Staying warm

Community warm spaces

Many local authorities are creating community warm spaces this winter. You might also hear them called warm banks. These will be places in your local area where anyone can come in to warm up, and maybe have a cup of tea.

Contact your local authority to find out if there are any community warm spaces nearby. You can find their contact details at **gov.uk/find-local-council** or call the Local Government Association on **020 7664 3000**.



Good to know

It might be useful to have another look at your weekly or monthly budget. Money Helper has online support to help you do this at **moneyhelper.org.uk/en/everyday-money/budgeting/budget-planner**. If you need some help to make a budget, call Citizens Advice: **0800 144 8848** if you live in England, **0800 702 2020** if you live in Wales, or **0800 028 1456** if you live in Scotland.

Join the Priority Services Register

Make sure you've signed up to your energy supplier's and network operator's Priority Service Register if you:

- are over State Pension age
- have a disability
- have a long-term illness, or sight or hearing loss
- are in a vulnerable situation.

This gives you access to free support and services. Your energy supplier can give you advance notice of power cuts. You might also be offered alternative heating facilities if your supply is disrupted. They can also offer yearly gas-safety checks on your boiler.

Suppliers and network operators offer different help, so contact both to find out what they provide.

“ I have a bill for gas and electric that's £139 a month. I have to have the heating on because of my health.

1. Staying warm

Paying your bills

Here are some ways that you could get help towards your energy costs this winter.



Important

The help you can get this winter is subject to change. For up-to-date information, visit our website at **independentage.org/get-advice/money/benefits/financial-help-cold-weather**. You can also call our Helpline on **0800 319 6789** to arrange a free benefits check.



Pension Credit

Pension Credit is extra money from the government to top up your pension income. It also acts as a passport to other entitlements, such as Cold Weather Payments, Council Tax reductions and help with health costs.

To claim Pension Credit, you must be over State Pension age and on a low income. You can check your eligibility for it online at [gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim](https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim), or by calling the Pension Credit claim line on **0800 99 1234**.



Good to know

Our guide **Pension Credit** has more information about how to claim. Call our free Helpline on **0800 319 6789** to order a copy.

“ The day I received Pension Credit changed my life. Suddenly I was able to go out and do things.

1. Staying warm

Winter Fuel Payment

You may be eligible for Winter Fuel Payment if you have reached State Pension age, and lived in the UK for at least one day during the week of 19 to 25 September 2022.

You'll get between £250 and £600 each winter. Most payments are made automatically between November and December. The payment you get is based on your age, whether you receive certain benefits and who you live with. If you live with someone else who is eligible, the payment is split between you. Winter Fuel Payment is also tax free.

You should get a Winter Fuel Payment automatically through your State Pension. You will also get it if you're claiming benefits like Pension Credit or Attendance Allowance.



If you haven't been given it by 13 January, contact the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline to make a claim on **0800 731 0160**. You only need to claim once – after this, you'll receive payments automatically every year. Visit **[gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment](https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment)** for more information.

Cold Weather Payment

Cold Weather Payments are made if the average temperature is 0°C or lower for seven days in a row in your area. It helps people on a low income with their fuel costs. So, you might be eligible if you're getting Pension Credit or certain other benefits like Support for Mortgage Interest. You won't be eligible if you're living in a care home.

Each time the average temperature falls below 0°C for seven days in a row between 1 November and 31 March, you'll receive £25.

After each period of very cold weather in your area, you should get a payment within 14 working days. It's paid into the same bank or building society account as your benefit payments. Getting it won't affect any of your other benefits.

This year's scheme is due to start on 1 November. If you're eligible for Cold Weather Payments, you should receive them automatically. If you think you should have received a payment but haven't, contact your pension centre.

1. Staying warm

Warm Home Discount

If you get Guarantee Pension Credit or have a low income, you could also get a Warm Home Discount on your energy bill. The money isn't paid to you, but will be taken off your energy bill by your energy supplier. It is worth £150.

To get the discount:

- you must qualify for Guarantee Pension Credit
- you must have your or your partner's name on the bill, and
- your supplier has to be signed up to the Warm Home Discount scheme.



You can check if they are signed up online at **[gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme/energy-suppliers](https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme/energy-suppliers)** or by calling the Warm Home Discount helpline on **0800 731 0214**.

Energy Bills Support Scheme

The Energy Bills Support Scheme is a £400 discount on your energy bills over winter 2022–23. You won't have to pay it back. It is applied directly to your energy bill, so you don't have to do anything to claim it. You'll still get a discount if you're in arrears on your electricity bill.

If you live off-grid, in a houseboat or in a park home, you will also receive £400.

The discount will start being applied in October 2022, and will continue until March 2023. You'll get a £66 discount in October and November, and a £67 discount in December, January, February and March.

If you use a prepayment meter, you will automatically get equivalent vouchers, which you will have to redeem. These will apply from the first week of each month. They will either come as a redeemable voucher (either by SMS text, email or post) or an automatic credit when you top up.

1. Staying warm

Cost of Living Payment

If you get means-tested benefits like Pension Credit (**page 15**) you will get a one-off payment of up to £650 in 2022. It will be paid in two parts – one from July and the other in autumn.

If you have reached State Pension age, you will also get an up to £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment. You have to claim Winter Fuel Payment to get this extra payment. It will be paid on top of any other benefits you get, and won't affect them. It will be paid as a top-up to your Winter Fuel Payment in November or December 2022.

If you claim disability benefits like Attendance Allowance, you will get a one-off payment of £150 from September 2022. You must've been claiming a disability benefit from May 2022 to qualify.

Winter Fuel Support Scheme

You can only get this payment if you live in Wales. It is a one-off £200 cash payment from your local authority to help pay your fuel bills. You can apply for it if you claim certain benefits like Pension Credit, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or Carer's Allowance. To get it, you have to apply to your local authority.

“ I am so grateful for all the help and advice. I was able to obtain benefits I didn't even know I was entitled to and I feel like a 'heavy weight' has been lifted from my shoulders.

If you owe money to your energy supplier

If you are finding it difficult to pay your energy bill, or are in debt, reach out to a debt advice service as soon as you can. You can find a list of advice services at moneyhelper.org.uk/en/money-troubles/dealing-with-debt/debt-advice-locator. You can also call our free Helpline on **0800 319 6789**.

You then might want to contact your energy supplier. Energy companies have to support you to find a way to pay them. They must also give extra support if you get State Pension, have a disability or a chronic illness.

1. Staying warm

You can ask them for:

- a review of your payments and debt repayments, especially if you pay by direct debit at a set rate
- breaks in paying, or reductions
- more time to pay
- access to hardship funds (**page 24**)
- advice about energy efficiency.

You can also apply for the Government's Breathing Space scheme. This is a free service that could give you up to 60 days of legal protection from your creditors. It also freezes interest and penalty charges. You have to apply for this through a debt adviser, and won't be able to refer yourself directly.



To find out more, and get free debt advice, visit **stepchange.org** or call on **0800 138 1111**.



Good to know

If you can't agree with your energy supplier, contact Citizens Advice if you live in England or Wales (**0808 223 1133**, citizensadvice.org.uk) or Advice Direct Scotland if you live in Scotland (**0808 196 8660**, energyadvice.scot).

National Debtline has information about your rights when repaying energy arrears (**0808 808 4000**, nationaldebtline.org).



Important

Your supplier isn't allowed to disconnect you between 1 October and 31 March if:

- you are State Pension age and
- you live alone, or you only live with other people who have reached State Pension age.

Grants and trusts

If you're struggling to pay for your energy bills, your energy provider may have a pot of money set aside to help you pay it. Get in touch with your supplier and ask if they have a grant or trust.

If your supplier doesn't have one, you can apply for a grant from the British Gas Energy Trust (**0121 348 7797, britishgasenergytrust.org.uk**). You don't have to be a British Gas customer to get this grant. You do need proof that you've been given money advice in the past three months. This might be a letter confirming the advice given, a standard financial statement or a Personal Action Plan. You can find a list of advice services at **moneyhelper.org.uk/en/money-troubles/dealing-with-debt/debt-advice-locator**.

You can apply for grants through Charis (**01733 421075, charisgrants.com**).



2. Staying safe

Cold weather brings different challenges. This chapter outlines ways to keep safe over the winter months.

2. Staying safe



Good to know

Our **Home safety** guide has lots of information about looking after yourself around your home. Call our Helpline on **0800 319 6789** to order a free copy.

Fire safety

To stay safe from fire this winter, at a time when the cost of living is rising, follow the home fire safety advice below.

- Fit at least one working smoke alarm on every floor of your home and a heat alarm in your kitchen. Test them regularly by pressing the test button until they beep.
- If you smoke, try to smoke outdoors. Never smoke in bed, and make sure you extinguish smoking materials properly.
- Take care when cooking, especially if you're using the hob. Never leave cooking unattended.
- Be careful if you're using open fires to keep warm. Make sure you always use a fire guard to protect against flying sparks from embers.

- Always use a candle holder and never leave candles unattended.
- Keep portable heaters away from curtains and furniture, and never use them for drying clothes. Always unplug electric heaters when you go out or go to bed.
- Never use hot water bottles in the same bed as an electric blanket.
- Make an escape plan in case of fire. Know your escape route and keep it clear.
- If you would be unable to escape without help in the event of a fire, talk to your care provider or the fire service about this.

Your local fire service may be able to check that your home is fire safe. Contact them directly and ask if you are eligible for a home fire safety visit. You can find your local fire service at **nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/fire-and-rescue-services** or by calling the National Fire Chiefs Council on **0121 380 7311**.

If there is a fire in your home, get out, stay out and call **999** for the fire service.

2. Staying safe



Important

If you suspect you've got a gas leak in your home, call the National Gas Emergency number on **0800 111 999**.

Carbon monoxide

Free-standing gas heaters, gas cookers, gas fires, boilers and water heaters can all leak carbon monoxide.

First, get a carbon monoxide alarm. They are available from most DIY shops and supermarkets. Check the batteries in it regularly.

Look out for the signs of a gas leak:

- the gas flame on an appliance appearing 'floppy' and burning yellow instead of blue
- your pilot light appearing 'floppy' or blowing out frequently
- soot or yellow-brown stains appearing around an appliance
- smelling or seeing smoke
- having a lot of condensation in the same room as a gas appliance.

You may have carbon monoxide poisoning if you feel flu-like symptoms inside your home, but they go away when you're outside. You should call a doctor as soon as you can if you experience headache, nausea, breathlessness, dizziness, or have fainted or been unconscious.

The best ways to protect yourself are to know the signs, have your gas appliances serviced every year, and to fit a carbon monoxide alarm.



2. Staying safe

Slips and falls

In your home

It's important to make sure your home is safe, especially if you are doing more exercise and activities in it during winter:

- use a non-slip bathmat
- mop up spills immediately
- have a night-light in the bedroom or bedside light or torch by your bed in case you need to get up in the night
- remove trailing leads from plugs
- keep stairs clear from clutter and well lit
- don't overload electrical sockets
- carry a mobile phone with you so you can call for help if you need to.

Being careful outside

If you must go out when it's icy, wear shoes with good grip and a warm lining, and put on thick socks. Keep grit and/or salt to put on your path. Check if your council can give it to you for free, or you can buy it from a DIY store. Some councils provide it for free in on-street grit boxes.

If you live in England or Wales, you can find out which streets your council will grit at **[gov.uk/roads-council-will-grit](https://www.gov.uk/roads-council-will-grit)**. If you live in Scotland, Traffic Scotland has an online map of which roads they will grit (**[trafficscotland.org/wintertreatment](https://www.trafficscotland.org/wintertreatment)**).

It's a good idea to carry a mobile phone with you, if you can. Make sure it's fully charged before you go outside.

“ In winter we need to be more careful of falling and it is helpful to learn and practise getting up off the floor.

2. Staying safe

If you do have a fall

If you do have a fall, lie still for a minute.
Try to stay calm and check yourself for injuries.

If you can't get up, or feel pain in your hip or back, try to call for help by using your phone or pendant, or by banging on radiators or walls. Try to keep warm by covering yourself with whatever is close by, and try to keep moving your limbs and roll from side to side if you are able to.

If you can get up:

1.

Roll on to your side, and then push up on to your elbows.



2.

Use your arms to push yourself upwards, on to your hands and knees.



3.

Crawl towards a very stable piece of furniture (a sturdy chair or bed) and hold on to it for support.



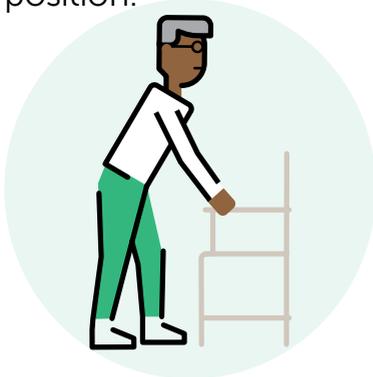
4.

Slide or raise your foot on your stronger leg forwards, so your foot is flat on the floor.



5.

Lean forwards and push up on the furniture, using your arms and front leg. Slowly rise to a standing position.



6.

Turn around and sit down. Sit for a minute or two and catch your breath.



2. Staying safe

Scams

Scams are crimes. Criminals trick people into giving away money and personal information. These tricks can be complex and take a long time, or can be as instant as a text message or phone call. Scammers take advantage of times of uncertainty.

There are a few things you can do to keep yourself safe.

Be aware of where any benefits or financial help is coming from. **Page 14** of this guide outlines what is available, and where you will get it. A local authority would never contact you to get your bank details.

Be wary of all cold-callers and 'too good to be true' deals. If you want to make your home more energy efficient, especially as it starts to get colder, see **page 9** of this guide. If you're unsure about whether something is a scam, call the organisation directly. Make sure you find their number on your own source, like an old bank statement or the back of your bank card.

Try to stay calm. We are all concerned about money because of the cost of living crisis. Scammers exploit this uncertainty and will try to pressure you into making snap decisions. Always take a step back and think about any financial decision you're making. You should seek independent financial advice if it is a big financial decision. Remember, any legitimate organisation reaching out to you won't put time pressures on you.

“ It's more relevant than ever that we remain alert. These criminals are professional and good at what they do – be aware and don't engage with them.

2. Staying safe

If someone has scammed you

Scams are becoming more and more complicated, and many people have fallen victim to them. You have nothing to be ashamed of – you have been the victim of a crime.

If you think you have been scammed, contact your bank immediately. Then, make sure you report it. You may not always be able to get your money back, but you might be able to take steps to stop it happening again – to you or other people. If you live in England or Wales, scams should be reported to Action Fraud (**0300 123 2040**, **actionfraud.police.uk**). If you live in Scotland, report any scams to Police Scotland (**101**).



Our guide **Scamwise** has lots more information about scams. You can order a free copy by calling our Helpline on **0800 319 6789**.

Health emergencies

We all know that NHS resources become stretched over winter. But this shouldn't stop you getting emergency help when you need it. The information here applies for both mental health and physical health emergencies. If you would like more tips on managing mental health, see **page 41**.

If the emergency is life-threatening

Call **999** if you or someone else is seriously ill or injured, and there is a risk to life. If you are deaf, hearing impaired or have a speech impediment, you can register for the emergencySMS scheme (**emergencysms.net**). This service means you can contact emergency services via SMS text message.

Once you are in touch with the emergency services, try to stay calm. Try your best to answer all the questions they ask. Don't hang up until the person handling your call has told you that they have all the information they need.

2. Staying safe

If you need urgent medical help, but aren't sure what to do

Contact the NHS 111 service, either by calling **111** or online at **111.nhs.uk**. You can ask for a translator if you need one. The person you speak to will be able to advise what is best to do to get you help.

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call **999**. You should attend your local NHS Accident & Emergency if you require an urgent mental health assessment.

You can call the Samaritans on **116 123** (freephone) if you need to talk to someone urgently about how you are feeling.



Good to know

If your health issue isn't urgent, some GP surgeries and pharmacies are part of the NHS Minor Ailment Scheme. Under this scheme, if you don't usually pay for prescriptions, you won't have to pay for medicine for minor illnesses. Ask your pharmacy if they are a part of it.

COVID-19 in winter

It is likely that the impact of COVID-19 will be worse in winter. You may want to think about extra ways you can keep yourself safe, like wearing a mask, keeping your distance, washing your hands and carrying hand sanitiser. You might also be wondering when your next booster vaccine is (**page 63**).

Remember – you should not feel uncomfortable taking any precautions you need to feel safe.

For more information about how to live around COVID-19, visit **independentage.org/get-advice/health-and-care/living-covid-19-post-restrictions** or call our free Helpline on **0800 319 6789**.

“ Drink plenty of hot drinks. Don't skimp on eating nourishing food. Move around inside and outside. Don't be afraid to seek advice.



3. Staying well

Keeping yourself as well as possible is vital in winter. The cold weather and short days can make it more challenging to look after ourselves, but this section has some tips and advice.

Mental health and wellbeing

We know things may be difficult at the moment. If you find yourself feeling anxious, stressed or overwhelmed, there's support out there for you. Reach out to your GP, or an organisation like the Silver Line (**0800 470 8090**, thesilverline.org.uk) or Samaritans (**116 123**, samaritans.org) for help.

As well as exercising and eating well, staying connected with others can help to improve your mental health.

Stay in touch with friends, family, neighbours, clubs and your community by phone or meeting up. It can be useful to keep a list of these phone numbers to remind you to call, or use a calendar to remind you of important events and reasons to reach out. If you're able to volunteer, giving back to our communities is a great way to feel connected.



Read our guide **If you're feeling lonely** for tips on things you could try.

3. Staying well



If you feel yourself being anxious or worrying a lot, try to focus on things in your control. Limit how much news you watch or listen to. Take time to chat about how you're feeling with people you trust. If you feel like you're panicking, try to take deep breaths.

It's always a good idea to keep to your routine, as much as you can. Some people find daily to-do lists helpful. Take time to notice the little things that make you smile, and schedule in activities that you enjoy. Continue accessing treatment and support for physical and mental health conditions from your GP.

If you struggle with low mood and tiredness during the winter, you may be experiencing seasonal affective disorder (SAD). For more information visit [nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad/overview](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad/overview).

“ Your local library is a warm place not just for reading but for using computers and finding out what's going on. There are often reading groups, talks, classes and it's a great place to go.

3. Staying well



Good to know

We know things may be difficult at the moment. If you are struggling with a particular part of your mental health, we have free guides focusing on:

- **Understanding alcohol and drug misuse**
- **Managing anxiety**
- **Dealing with depression**
- **Hoarding.**

You can order free copies by calling our Helpline on **0800 319 6789**.

Eating well

You might be worried about having to cook food this winter, but it's important that you eat at least one hot meal a day to help keep you warm and healthy. See **page 9** for information about which appliances use less energy to cook.

It's also a good idea to have plenty of variety in your diet. This helps you get all the nutrients you need and maintain a healthy weight.



3. Staying well

Stay hydrated – we need about 6-8 drinks a day to stay well hydrated. This reduces infections and improves concentration, energy and mood. If you drink alcohol, it is recommended to not have more than 14 units (one unit is a half pint or a small glass of wine) a week. Try to spread this out and have alcohol-free days. Alcohol does dehydrate you so, if you can, have water, juice or a soft drink too.

If you have a poor appetite:

- eat little and often
- use full-fat food and drinks (for example, full-fat milk, yoghurts and cheese)
- eat more protein such as meat, fish, eggs, pulses or nuts. It may help to speak to your GP if you're worried about what you're eating
- make meal preparation easy, for when you need something quick and simple. For example, stock up on ready meals, snacks and finger food, and use meal-delivery services.

If you're struggling to get out, some charities offer help if you have difficulty with food shopping. For example, Age UK supplies home delivery services for a small fee. You can search for services near you on their website or call for more information (**0800 678 1602**, ageuk.org.uk/services/in-your-area/shopping).

Your council might also be able to provide food delivery, or Meals on Wheels. You can check at gov.uk/meals-home, or call the council.

If you're struggling to buy or prepare food yourself, call our free Helpline on **0800 319 6789** to see if you can get extra help at home.

“ Make yourself get out of bed in the morning and have a warm drink and something to eat – get your body going!

3. Staying well

Food banks

If you're having trouble affording food, you could contact your local food bank. They can supply emergency food and support. The Trussell Trust has more information on where you can find a food bank (**01722 580 178**, **trusselltrust.org**). You can also find your nearest food bank using the Independent Food Aid Network's online map (**foodaidnetwork.org.uk/our-members**).

If you can't get online, you can call your local council, or our free Helpline on **0800 319 6789**.



Keeping active

Any movement is good for us, particularly as we go out less in winter. It can make us feel warmer, and can improve our sleep, appetite and mood. Later Life Training has a list of strength and balance exercise resources you can use at home. You can access them online at **laterlifetraining.co.uk/supporting-people-to-be-active-at-home**.

Here are some seated and standing exercises you could try at home. Before you start, get your space ready for you to move around it. Clear away any clutter or trip hazards, but keep something sturdy nearby that you can use for support. Keep a phone nearby in case you need it, and a glass of water ready to sip as you exercise.

As you start, make sure you take it at your own pace. You can gradually build up the intensity if you feel like it. You might feel stiff or ache as you move your body, but if you start feeling any pain or dizziness, stop and rest. If this persists, contact your GP for advice. Make sure to keep breathing as you move.

Remember to warm up before you exercise, and cool down afterwards.

3. Staying well



A warm up exercise

Warms muscles and prepares for movement.

- What to do**
- Sit at the front of the chair.
 - Hold the sides of the chair.
 - March with control.
 - Build to a rhythm that feels comfortable.
 - Continue for 1-2 minutes.

Seated exercises

Make sure that the chair you use is sturdy and stable, so it doesn't move around when you're getting in and out of it. Wear comfortable clothes and supportive footwear.



3. Staying well



Wrist strengthener

Improves grip strength, helps opening jars.

-
- What to do**
- Fold or roll a hand towel or tea towel into a tube shape.
 - Sit tall then squeeze the towel tightly with both hands, hold for a slow count of five then release.
 - Repeat this exercise 6-8 times.

More challenging option

- Squeeze then twist your towel before holding for 10 seconds.



Arm swings

Helps with stamina and endurance.

-
- What to do**
- Sit tall away from the chair back.
 - Place both feet flat on the floor directly under knees.
 - Bend elbows and swing arms from the shoulder.
 - Build to a rhythm that is comfortable.
 - Continue for 30 seconds.

More challenging option

- Increase pace and time to 1-2 minutes.

3. Staying well



Pelvic floor strengthener

Helps reduce 'leaking' when coughing and laughing.

-
- What to do**
- Tighten the muscles as if you were trying to stop passing urine and wind at the same time and hold.
 - Try to hold together for 10 seconds.
 - Rest for four seconds, then repeat.
 - Perform this 10 times.

-
- Avoid**
- Squeezing legs together.
 - Tightening buttocks.
 - Holding breath.

-
- More challenging option**
- Try 10 quick contractions by drawing up the pelvic floor.



Front knee strengthener

Strengthens the knee for walking and bending.

- What to do**
- Sit back in the chair, back supported and feet under knees.
 - Brush one foot across the floor then lift the ankle slowly and straighten (do not lock) the knee.
 - Lower the foot with control.
 - Aim to lift for a slow count of three and lower for a slow count of five each time.
 - Repeat 10 times on one leg then swap legs.

More challenging option

- Sit away from the back of the chair so more of your leg is off the chair when you lift. Keep the back strong while you lift the leg.

3. Staying well

Some standing exercises

Make sure that you are near a sturdy and stable worktop, and that any chairs used will not move during the exercise. Wear comfortable clothes and supportive footwear.





Sit to stand

If repeated regularly and slowly will improve lower limb strength and stability.

-
- What to do**
- Sit tall near the front of the chair.
 - Place feet slightly behind knees.
 - Lean slightly forwards.
 - Stand up (using hands on the chair for support if needed – progress to no hands over time).
 - Step back until legs touch the chair, then stand tall, bend knees and slowly lower bottom back into the chair.
 - Repeat 10 times.

More challenging option

- Try doing the exercise extra slowly and hover for a few seconds just before finally sitting.

3. Staying well



Heel raises

Helps strengthen muscles at the front of the foot, improves balance.

-
- What to do**
- Stand tall holding a sturdy table, chair or even the sink.
 - Raise heels taking your weight over the big toe and second toe, hold for a second.
 - Lower heels to the floor with control.
 - Repeat 10 times.

More challenging option

- Repeat the exercise, doing it slowly, and hold for a second or so just before putting the heel down again.



One leg stands

Helps improve walking stability.

-
- What to do**
- Stand close to a support surface and hold on.
 - Balance on one leg, keeping the supporting leg straight but knee soft.
 - Stand tall and look ahead.
 - Hold for 10 seconds.
 - Repeat on the other leg.

-
- More challenging option**
- Try to use the support surface less and hold the position for longer, up to 30 seconds.

3. Staying well

Cool down

Finish by marching at a relaxed pace for 1-2 minutes or try this stretch.



Back of thigh stretch

Helps with putting on shoes and socks, lengthens stride when walking.

-
- What to do**
- Sit at the very front of the chair.
 - Straighten one leg, placing the heel on the floor.
 - Place both hands on the other leg, then sit really tall.
 - Lean forwards with a straight back and feel the stretch in the back of the thigh.
 - Hold for 10-20 seconds.
 - Relax and repeat on the other leg.

Any activity that warms you up and gets your heart beating can also be beneficial. You could try dancing or going up and down stairs. You could also do everyday things like cleaning, gardening or standing and stretching regularly.

Don't forget to ask your GP, library, leisure centre or your family and friends for information about any walking, strength and balance or other physical activity groups that you can join.



Good to know

The NHS has lots of online resources about exercise at [nhs.uk/live-well/exercise](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise). We Are Undefeatable ([weareundefeatable.co.uk](https://www.weareundefeatable.co.uk)) also has information about managing your exercise with a long-term health condition.

3. Staying well

Getting your jabs

Get your flu jab

It's important to have a flu jab every year. Even if you had one last year, it might not protect you from this year's flu. It's free if:

- you're 50 or over
- you're a carer of an older person
- you have certain health conditions, such as diabetes or asthma.

Flu is more than just a bad cold and can increase your risk of more serious illnesses such as pneumonia. It's best to get the jab as early as possible, before the winter flu season. Make an appointment with your GP or see if your local pharmacy offers the flu jab.

“ Get your flu jab and any other jab that you may be able to have, like shingles.

Check you've had a pneumo jab

The pneumonia vaccine (also called a pneumococcal or pneumo jab) is a one-off jab. It helps protect against pneumonia, meningitis and septicaemia. You can get a free jab if you're 65 or over.

Contact your GP to get the jab or to check if you've already had it.

Get your COVID-19 booster jab

In autumn 2022 a COVID-19 booster jab will be offered for free to anyone either:

- age 50 years or over, or
- living in a care home, or
- living with a medical condition that makes them more vulnerable to COVID-19.

Staying on top of your booster jabs can keep you safer from COVID-19. If you can get the booster, you will be told by your GP when you can book an appointment. You can then book directly with them, or book online at **nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination**.

3. Staying well

Get your shingles vaccination

If you are aged 70 to 79, you can get a shingles jab free with the NHS.

Once you become eligible, a GP or practice nurse will offer you the vaccine if you go to your doctor for any reason. If you don't want to wait for this, contact your GP surgery to arrange an appointment to have the jab.

“ Keep active and stimulate the brain. Get out and about when you can. Isolation and loneliness can be devastating. Live well this winter.

Useful contacts

Your local council can help with financial, wellbeing and benefit advice and other support, like getting online.

Links to council websites are listed at greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/helping-hand. All phone lines are open Monday to Friday.

Area	Number	Opening hours
Bolton	01204 333333	8.45am to 4.45pm
Bury	0161 253 7030	8.45am to 5pm
Manchester	0800 023 2692	9am to 4.30pm
Oldham	0161 770 7007	9am to 5pm
Rochdale	01706 923685	9am to 5pm
Salford	0800 952 1000	9am to 5pm
Stockport	0161 474 1042	8.30am to 5pm
Tameside	0161 342 8355	8.30am to 4pm
Trafford	0808 278 7803	8.30am to 5.30pm
Wigan	01942 705221	9am to 5pm

Useful contacts

Greater Manchester Text Service

If you would prefer to text your question, we have a GM text relay service. Send a text to **07860 022876** to be directed to the right place in your area.

Crisis helplines in Greater Manchester

For mental health support, these helplines are available 24/7. If you live in Bolton, Manchester, Salford, Wigan or Trafford call **0800 953 0285**. If you live in Bury, Rochdale, Oldham, Stockport or Tameside call **0800 014 9995**.

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service

Find out if you are eligible for a Home Fire Safety Assessment at manchesterfire.gov.uk or call **0800 555 815**.

Greater Manchester Victim Support

If you have experienced a crime and want support, call **0300 303 0162** (or **08081 689 111** out of hours). Find out more at victimsupport.org.uk/resources/greater-manchester.

Age UK

Provides help and information for older people. Call **0800 678 1602** to be directed to your local branch or visit ageuk.org.uk.



Rhona's story

The cost of everything is going up. I have to have the heating on because of my health. The winter is the most worrying time, so I keep warm in my bed. For anyone with arthritis, they'll know what I'm talking about.

I don't have to pay for my television licence because I get Pension Credit. I couldn't do without watching the television: that's my lifeline. When my body's hurting, I get into my bed and watch something.

I don't think a lot of people know about benefits. Some people don't know what they're entitled to. I would tell someone to go and talk to Citizens Advice or Independent Age.

We older people try to do things for ourselves. We don't like to think we're getting old. But some people can't do it themselves, and we do need help.

About Independent Age

At Independent Age, we want more people in the UK to live a happy, connected and purposeful later life. That's why we support people aged over 65 to get involved in things they enjoy. We also campaign and give advice on the issues that matter most: health and care, money and housing.

For information or advice – we can arrange a free, impartial chat with an adviser – call us on freephone **0800 319 6789** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.30pm) or email us at **advice@independentage.org**.

You can also support this work by volunteering with us, joining our campaigns to improve life for older people experiencing hardship, donating to us or remembering us in your will.

For more information, visit **independentage.org** or call us on **0800 319 6789**.



**Independent
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