

# TOP 10 TIPS TO STAY WARM AND HEALTHY IN YOUR HOME



Action for Warm Homes

## 1 IMPROVE THE **ENERGY EFFICIENCY** OF YOUR HOME

Improving your insulation and making small changes to how you use energy can help you save money on your energy bills.

- **Insulate your loft.** 270mm or 10 inches is recommended and it could save you up to £250 a year on your energy bills.
- **Insulate your walls.** Cavity wall insulation can be quite cheap and save up to £250 a year on energy bills. Other types of internal and external wall insulation are also available for homes that do not have cavity walls.
- **Draught-proof your home.** This is one of the cheapest ways of reducing heat loss. Closing curtains at dusk; using insulation strips on windows and doors (available from DIY stores); fitting covers to your front door's keyholes and letterbox; and using underlay with carpets can all make a big difference to the warmth of your home.

There can be help available to install energy saving measures in your home. The **Energy Company Obligation (ECO)** can provide a range of 'free' insulation, heating and other measures to some low-income and vulnerable households. Other schemes are also available in some areas. For more information contact the **Energy Saving Advice Service on 0300 123 1234**.

**Home Improvement Agencies** such as 'Care and Repair' - provide eligible owner occupiers and private tenants with free impartial advice and support to repair, maintain, improve or adapt their homes.

This can include help with installing energy efficiency measures. The service is available to some older people, those living with a disability and financially disadvantaged households.

**Telephone: 0845 864 5210** or web: [wwwFOUNDATIONS.UK.COM](http://wwwFOUNDATIONS.UK.COM)

## 2 REGISTER FOR **PRIORITY SERVICES**

If you're of pensionable age, disabled or living with a long-term limiting illness then you may qualify for extra help from your energy supplier.

'Priority services' include:

- Providing important communications in Braille, large print or audio CD
- Gas safety checks for appliances
- Meter reading services
- Special controls and adaptations for controlling heating and assistance if there's a power outage
- Free password scheme

Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) also offer priority services for customers who are dependent on electricity for home medical care; have a chronic illness or short-term medical condition; are disabled; have special communication needs; have a young baby or receive a state pension.

Contact your gas/electricity suppliers and distribution network operator for more information and to register. Details of your distribution network operator can be found on your electricity bill.



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**MAXIMISE YOUR INCOME**

A benefit entitlement check will help you to see if you're getting all the benefits and services you're entitled to. Some benefits will provide you with a passport to FREE energy efficiency improvements or energy discounts so it pays to check.

**Turn2US** helps people in financial need to gain access to benefits and other financial support.

Telephone: **0808 802 2000**

[www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

**Citizens Advice Bureaux** can provide help with benefits. Check your local phonebook.

[www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/benefits](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/benefits)

**GOV.UK** is the government's online information service and provides comprehensive advice on benefits and entitlements.

[www.gov.uk/benefitscalculators](http://www.gov.uk/benefitscalculators)

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**CHECK ELIGIBILITY FOR DISCOUNTS OR SUPPORT FOR ENERGY BILLS**

**Warm Homes Discount** provides eligible households with a discount on their electricity bills - £140 in 2015-16. You will be eligible for support if you receive the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit (even if you get Savings Credit as well) on the qualifying day. **Warm Home Discount Scheme** helpline **0845 603 9439**, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm.

Suppliers also offer support to some other low-income and vulnerable households. Contact your electricity supplier (details on your energy bill) or **Home Heat Helpline - 0800 33 66 99**

**Winter Fuel Payment** is an annual payment of between £100 and £300 to help older people with the cost of keeping warm in winter. Payments are automatic between November and December to older people who have claimed it before or are in receipt of State Pension or other specific benefits. Other older people will need to apply for it. For more information call the **Winter Fuel Payments helpline** on **08459 151515**.

**Cold Weather Payment** is made to eligible households on means-tested benefits in areas where 'exceptionally cold weather' is forecast or has occurred. Automatic payments amount to £25 per qualifying week between 1 November and 31 March.

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**CHECK YOU'RE GETTING THE BEST DEAL FOR YOUR ENERGY**

You could save hundreds of pounds a year by switching energy suppliers, especially if you have never done so before.

Check to see how much you could save by contacting one of the price comparison websites displaying the Ofgem Confidence Code logo such as:



WEBSITE	TELEPHONE
<a href="http://www.energyhelpline.com">www.energyhelpline.com</a>	0800 074 0745
<a href="http://www.energylinx.co.uk">www.energylinx.co.uk</a>	0800 849 7077
<a href="http://www.moneysupermarket.com">www.moneysupermarket.com</a>	0800 177 7861
<a href="http://www.myutilitygenius.co.uk">www.myutilitygenius.co.uk</a>	0203 468 0461
<a href="http://www.simplyswitch.com">www.simplyswitch.com</a>	0800 111 395
<a href="http://www.switchgasandelectric.com">www.switchgasandelectric.com</a>	0871 711 7771
<a href="http://www.theenergyshop.com">www.theenergyshop.com</a>	0845 330 7274
<a href="http://www.ukpower.co.uk">www.ukpower.co.uk</a>	0800 320 2000
<a href="http://www.unravelit.com">www.unravelit.com</a>	0800 862 0021
<a href="http://www.uswitch.com">www.uswitch.com</a>	0800 6888 244
<a href="http://www.runpathdigital.com">www.runpathdigital.com</a>	

Have your most recent energy statement to hand to provide information on your energy use. Switching can be highly dependent on your lifestyle, energy needs and preferred payment method. Collective switching options may also be available that may help you to save even more.

Before switching ensure the new supplier offers the type of tariff you require (for example Economy 7 or Economy 10) and accepts your preferred payment method.

If you do not want to switch suppliers talk to your current supplier and ask about other tariffs and payment options that may help reduce your bills.

If you use solid fuel, oil or bulk/bottled gas, look around for cheaper suppliers before you sign a contract. Co-operatives or clubs may operate locally and may have already negotiated cheaper supplies.



## 6

### GET ADVICE ON **MANAGING BILLS**

If you're struggling or unable to pay your energy bills speak to your supplier as soon as possible. Energy suppliers will work with customers to find solutions to payment difficulties but they can only do this if they are alerted to the problem. Energy suppliers must follow procedures which include special payment plans to help those in debt, often with a low debt recovery level.

Impartial advice on dealing with energy debts and other debts is available from your local advice agency or:

#### **Citizens Advice Bureau National Debtline**

Telephone: **0808 808 4000**

#### **Step Change Debt Charity**

Telephone: **0800 138 1111**

## 7

### USE **HEATING CONTROLS**

- Seek advice on using your heating controls to manage your heating.
- Install a room thermostat, programmer (and thermostatic radiator valves where applicable) to manage your energy use and household temperature.
- When at home in colder weather your main living space should be kept at 21°C and all other spaces, including bedrooms, at 18°C for health and comfort. Some older people, young children, disabled people or those with a long-term illness may need higher temperatures, but avoid overheating rooms.
- If you're too warm turn your room thermostat down to a comfortable temperature for you (but be mindful of recommended temperatures for colder weather).
- Use a timer on your controls. Set the heating to come on half an hour before you get up in the morning and half an hour before you will arrive home.

## 8

### USE **HOT WATER CONTROLS**

- Learn to use your hot water controls to help you manage your energy use and spend.
- Remember not to leave electric hot water immersion heaters on for longer than you need as this wastes energy and money.
- Fit a thermostat to your hot water cylinder if you don't have one. Setting the thermostat to 60°C will keep water warm and save energy.

## 9

### **PROTECT YOUR HOME**

Improving the energy efficiency of your home and how you ventilate it when undertaking daily tasks such as bathing, washing and cooking will help to reduce condensation, damp, and mould growth which can affect your health.

- Make sure that fuel burning appliances such as fires and boilers are regularly serviced by a qualified engineer to make sure they are safe to use and do not put you at risk of carbon monoxide gas poisoning or other hazards. Danger signs are:
  - Gas flames burning orange or yellow instead of the normal blue
  - Soot stains on or above the appliance
  - Coal or wood fires that burn slowly or go out.
- For gas appliances ensure engineers are Gas Safe-registered and for oil appliances OFTEC-registered. Householders registered for priority services (see 2) are eligible for free gas safety check.
- Never cover or obstruct air vents or air bricks as they're there to ensure your home is properly ventilated.
- Be mindful of your security if you have to open windows and doors to ventilate rooms.

## 10

### CHANGE YOUR ENERGY USE **BEHAVIOURS**

- Turn off appliances when not in use and avoid using stand-by buttons
- Turn off lighting when not in use and use energy saving bulbs to save money and energy
- Install cheap radiator panels to reflect heat back into rooms
- Close curtains at night and tuck them behind radiators

#### IN THE **KITCHEN**

- Only boil enough water in your kettle for your needs
- A microwave is more cost effective for cooking small items than an electric oven
- Use pan lids to reduce steam and the energy needed for cooking
- Use economy settings (such as 30°C) on washing machines and dry clothing outdoors or in a well-ventilated room

## IN THE BATHROOM

- Save energy and water by having a quick shower rather than a bath
- Ideally use a water saving shower head
- Don't leave hot water taps running when washing

## EXTRA ADVICE AND SERVICES

**Home Heat Helpline** provides energy advice, advice on benefits, electricity and gas payment options and advice for those with special needs.

Telephone: **0800 33 66 99**

Textphone: **0800 027 2122**. A call back service is also available.

**Trust Funds:** Some energy suppliers provide trust funds to help eligible households facing financial hardship including energy debts. Contact the **Home Heat Helpline** for advice.

**Preparing for colder weather:** Take advice on how to prepare for colder weather and keep warm and healthy in winter.

**Age UK** provides useful advice for older people

Telephone: **0800 169 6565**.

Alternatively look at the **Winter Health** pages online at **NHS**

**Choices:** [www.nhs.uk/livewell/winterhealth/pages/keepwarmkeepwell](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/winterhealth/pages/keepwarmkeepwell)

**Home safety gas emergencies:** If you smell gas call the national Gas Emergency Helpline on **0800 111 999**.

**Gas appliance checks:** Only **Gas Safe Register**-approved engineers are qualified to service gas appliances. Check the 7 digit number on ID cards at [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk) or telephone: **0800 408 5500** to verify that the engineer is registered.

**Electricity emergencies:** Call your local distribution network operator (look in the phone book or on your latest energy bill).

**Electrical safety:** The **Electrical Safety Council** provides practical advice on preventing electrical accidents at home. [www.esc.org.uk](http://www.esc.org.uk)

**Fire safety:** **GOV.UK** provides a range of fire safety information [www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-safety-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-safety-guidance).

Ask your local **Fire Service** if they provide 'home fire safety checks', fire alarms, carbon monoxide alarms or advice (See your phone book for contact details).

**Condensation damp:** Contact your local authority environmental health department or look online for advice on reducing condensation damp. If you are a private tenant they may undertake an inspection of your home and if the landlord is at fault compel them to take action.

See NEA's separate leaflet available to download at [www.nea.org.uk/resource-leaflets](http://www.nea.org.uk/resource-leaflets)



*Action for Warm Homes*

**NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION**  
the national fuel poverty and energy efficiency charity

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