

Tips to turn your **blue winter** into a **bright winter**

When the temperature drops, we are more vulnerable to weather-related health problems and injuries. Winter can be a frustrating time because obstacles can disrupt daily routines and put an additional financial strain on budgets for housing, exercise, electricity, travel, and medication. Like most things in life, it is better to be prepared. Below are a few tips to keep yourself warm and cosy this winter.

Happy healthy warm homes



Being in a cold and damp house is not only unpleasant; it can have serious consequences for your health. It is especially important as we get older to keep our homes warm and dry. The World Health Organisation recommends that you keep your living space between 18° and 21° Celsius. There are so many little ways you can save on energy costs and keep warm this winter. Below are a few tips to keep that electricity bill down over winter.

Curtains – buy them nice and thick and close them when the sun goes down. The idea is to let the sunshine in during the day and then trap the warmth inside. Heavy lined curtains are great insulators.

Seal any Gaps – in older homes, there may be gaps between the window and its frame. To fill those gaps, you can buy tape and fillers at hardware stores.

Circulation – keep radiators and heaters clear so heat can circulate; do not place furniture or dry laundry in front of them.

Close off Doors – if there are rooms you do not use, close the doors to reduce wasted heat.

Heat Pumps/Radiators – heat your home without wasting energy by using heating controls such as thermostats and timers correctly.

Electric Blankets – don't be afraid of electric blankets: they are inexpensive to operate (just over \$10 per winter if used every night), especially when compared to electric heaters. Ensure your electric blanket is turned off when you get into bed. However, don't forget simple things like investing in warm socks, heated wheat bags, hot water bottles and using extra bedding at night.



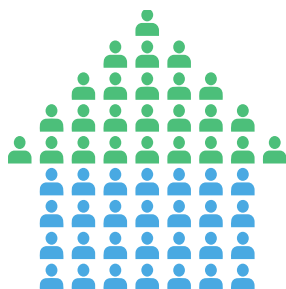
Smarter Lighting – replace incandescent, halogen, or compact fluorescent (CFL) bulbs with LEDs. They consume significantly less energy and last notably longer.

Check your Power Supplier – check your electricity supplier rates by visiting <https://www.powerswitch.org.nz> to see if you can get a better power deal elsewhere.

Break out the Crockpot – using a slow cooker all day uses one-third the electricity of cooking a roast in an electric oven for two hours. Cooking in bulk also provides a number of nutritious meals rather than just one.



Warmer kiwi homes grant



Warmer Kiwi Homes is a government grant for low-income homeowners. This funding is not available to people renting a home.

Grants cover up to 90% of the total cost of ceiling and underfloor insulation and/or 80% of the cost of an approved heater. Heater grants are capped at \$3,000 including GST.

To see if you are eligible visit - <https://www.eeca.govt.nz/co-funding/insulation-and-heater-grants/warmer-kiwi-homes-programme>

Important information for tenants

All rentals must comply with the healthy homes standards. Ensure your landlord is on board with these five required standards:

Heating – one or more 1.5kw fixed heaters are required in the living room. Heat Pumps, wood burners and flued gas heaters are also acceptable.

Insulation – underfloor and ceiling insulation have been mandatory since July 2019.

Moisture & Drainage – damp and mould are unacceptable and must be fixed straight away. Check that water does not pool and sit around outside your house and gutters are clear.

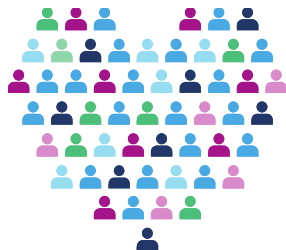
Ventilation – kitchen and bathrooms must have extractor fans that vent outside and not in the ceiling. This ensures steam and damp are extracted and keeping your home dry.

Draught Stopping – premises must be free from unreasonable gaps and holes. A good rule of thumb is if a \$2 coin can fit, the gap should be sealed. Landlords are required to block off holes in walls, ceilings, windows, floors, and doors.

More detailed information can be found at: <https://www.tenancy.govt.nz/healthy-homes/>



Social connection and community



Keeping active during winter also means keeping connected. Social activities are just as important as physical activities. Many community organisations provide free or low-cost transport. Contact your local Age Concern office and Information Centre (iSite) for knowledge on clubs and events available in your area.

Enjoy a Coffee – invite a friend over for coffee or lunch. Go to the movies.

Swimming & Aquatic Exercises – enjoy the warmth of your community pool.

Singing – join a choir with like-minded vocalists.

RSA or Cossie Club – become a member. Enjoy playing pool, darts, bingo, line dancing and membership meals.

Extra Clothing – remember when you are out and about make sure you take some extra layers, even if you don't need them immediately – the temperature can drop significantly when the sun goes down.

Total Mobility Scheme – this assistance is provided in the form of subsidised door-to-door transportation services for eligible people with long-term impairments to assist community participation. The Total Mobility Scheme is managed and operated by regional councils and Auckland Transport. You can obtain a card or vouchers to reduce your fare by 75% up to the subsidy maximum. The maximum subsidy does differ between regions so for more detailed information contact your local Age Concern office or regional council.

Exercise



During the winter months you may find the time and energy to exercise on a daily basis can be difficult. Physical activity increases blood flow throughout your body, stimulating energy to keep warm and the brain active. It is recommended that adults over the age of 65 need at least 150 minutes a week (30 minutes a day) of moderate exercise for strength, balance, and agility. When you cannot get outside, try these activities to keep yourself limber.

Housework – believe it or not, it keeps you moving. Try spreading out the chores over the day to keep the body moving, reducing stiffness.

Hobbies – knitting, reading, puzzles, yoga, playing darts or cards, and baking are all activities stimulating body and mind.

Online Exercise – television and the internet have a range of programmes for stretching, balance exercises, and dancing. Age Concerns programmes found on YouTube include, '[Steady As You Go](#)' and '[Movement for Parkinson's](#)'.



Home safety

Along with ensuring your home is warm and energy efficient over the winter, it must also be safe.

Smoke Alarms – only working smoke alarms save lives. Your local Fire Service offers smoke alarm checks and can help you install them in the correct rooms.

Electric Blankets – electric blankets should be checked regularly every year by a qualified electrician. Generally, electricians may provide discounts for SuperGold holders.

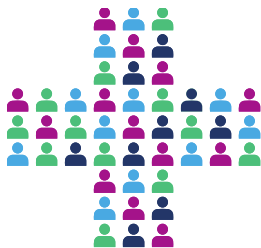
Power Outages – winter increases the likelihood of power cuts. Make sure you have a working flashlight and spare batteries on hand.

Heating Appliances – you should keep everything, including yourself, at least one metre away from any heating appliance or wood fire.

Non-Slip Mats – ensure you have non-slip mats at door entries to prevent falls due to wet paths and steps.



Medications



Over the winter months you may not be able to get out to have prescriptions filled. Check that your medication is up to date and that you have enough to see you through.

Prescriptions – most prescriptions are \$5. If you are aged 65 and over, prescriptions can be free. Prescriptions from specialists and non-publicly funded still have a \$15 charge. Talk to your pharmacist if you have questions

about prescription charges. Check that you have paracetamol at home for those winter chills.

Disability Allowance – Disability Allowance is a weekly payment made to people who have ongoing costs due to their disability. These could include doctor or hospital visits, medications, extra clothing, or travel. Check the link below to see if you are eligible for assistance.

<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/disability-allowance.html>

Flu Vaccine – ensure your flu vaccine is administered before winter sets in. The months of April and May are ideal. Remember the flu vaccine is free to all aged 65 and over.

COVID-19 Vaccine – as with the flu vaccine, your COVID-19 booster shots are available, and it is in your best interest to keep these up to date. Boosters are free and readily available just as the original vaccines were. To ensure you have the right timeframe between each booster check

<https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines>

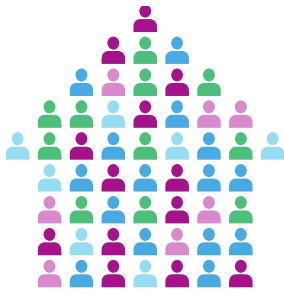
Shingles Vaccine – shingles (the adult version of Chickenpox) is a painful, itchy, blistering skin rash that worsens with age. Shingle vaccines are available to anyone over the age of 50 but are only free (funded) to those over the age of 65.

<https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/medicines/s/shingles-vaccine/>

Lemon & Honey – nothing beats a lemon and honey drink for sore throats and blocked noses.



Money



Money never seems to go far in the winter, with increased power and grocery bills, on top of everyday expenses. Reviewing your budget or seeking budgeting advice is a good step to managing your money effectively.

The Winter Energy Payment - is an extra payment to help with the cost of heating your home over the winter months. You don't need to apply – if you're eligible, you'll get the Winter Energy Payment automatically, along with your National Superannuation payments from WINZ. The Winter Energy Payment is paid from 1 May to 1 October each year.

Advance Payment of Benefit or Special Needs Grant – both of these monetary grants are available through Work and Income as one-off payments to help with essential or emergency costs if you are having financial difficulty. Applications can be made at Work and Income or further information is available at

<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/urgent-costs/>

Family Budgeting Services – can advise about managing your electricity accounts as many energy companies have payment plans or allow payments to be spread out over the year.

Disability Allowance – as with assistance for medications, WINZ can also assist with power, gas and heating.

<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/power-and-heating-if-you-have-a-disability.html>

Super Gold Card – don't forget to use your NZ Super Gold card to its best potential with discounts at stores or service providers on essentials such as electricity, healthcare, travel and food. The Super Gold card also has an app that can be downloaded to your phone for easy accessibility to discounts whilst out and about.

<https://supergold.govt.nz/>



Would you like more company?

If you are feeling lonely, or would just like more social contact, it's important to do something about it, and Age Concern can help.

Our Visiting Service is a befriending service that provides regular visits to older people who would like more company. Our visitors are volunteers who are keen to spend time with an older person for about an hour each week to enjoy conversation and shared interests and activities.

Find out more at www.ageconcern.org.nz

