

How can you keep yourself and your home warm this winter when energy costs are rising?

## **1. Firstly – stay healthy & safe**

Before you cut back on heating, there are a few important things to consider:

Older people, or those with asthma and other health conditions are more at risk if their body temperature drops. If in doubt, consult your GP and follow their advice. Age UK told us it's important older people do all they can to stay as warm as possible.

Check fire and safety advice before using any of the electrical appliances and gadgets mentioned below e.g. if using electric blankets, do not turn them on if wet and aim to buy new.

Hot water bottles can scald you if not used correctly. Aim to not use boiling water, and store bottles empty to prevent damage to the rubber.

Not heating your home properly can contribute to damp issues and frozen pipes if the weather's cold, which can result in hundreds of pounds of damage.

The Energy Saving Trust recommends ventilating rooms and having the heating on to some degree during winter.

## **2. Layer up**

Billy Connolly once said 'There's no such thing as bad weather, only the wrong clothes'.

Wearing lots of layers, rather than one thick piece of clothing, keeps you warmer and you can easily layer up and down as needed throughout the day and night. Base layers such as thermal vests or

long sleeve tops and leggings are fairly inexpensive and can work well to trap heat under your outer clothes. Keep a look out for clothing made from wool, cotton or fleecy fabric.

## **3. Get cosy – heat the human!**

Once you've layered up you can add some external heating to get you feeling cosy such as electric blankets, heat pads and footwarmers.

A microwaveable wheat bag used twice a day (buy one or make your own) will cost about 14p weekly, a hot water bottle used the same way will cost 69p weekly whilst an electric blanket used nightly will cost 85p each week.

## **4. Stop those draughts**

Stop spending your precious income on heating the outside by blocking where heat is being lost from your home via draughts.

Our houses need to be ventilated to be healthy, but if you can feel draughts in your home then that is normally too much ventilation:

- a simple draught excluder can stop the draught under a door

**NB when using a draught excluder this can be a trip hazard so be mindful where you place them to avoid falling over them.**

- DIY stores will have draught strips you can fit around draughty windows and doors

- unused chimneys will lose a lot of energy, so getting a chimney balloon will stop this, but make sure its removed if the fireplace is going to be used

- use pet flaps rather than leaving doors open for pets

## **5. Understanding your energy use**

Whenever you turn on a socket or light the gas, you are using energy, but both the amount of energy used and its cost vary drastically depending on what is connected.

Don't forget that your home's largest energy use is probably automatic and depends on how your heating and hot water systems are set up.

To save the most energy it is good to concentrate first on large uses – so heating rather than mobile phone charger for example. Remember, not using energy is the best way to reduce your usage.

## **6. Reduce large energy uses**

Appliances that heat up are likely to be using a lot of energy, so anything you can do to use these less or at a lower temperature will be saving you energy.

Home heating:

- turn your thermostat down a little
- reduce the flow temperature in your radiators
- don't warm rooms you don't use

Hot water:

- if you find yourself cooling your hot water with cold in mixer taps for example, you could look at turning down the hot water temperature on your boiler or tank
- we rarely need lots of hot water all day, so you can adjust your boiler to heat only when you need it
- make sure your hot water cylinder is properly insulated

Washing machine / tumble dryer / dishwasher:

- Do fewer bigger washes

- Try to always use the low temperature eco settings – they may take a bit longer but will use less energy and water
- Tumble driers, while convenient, use lots of energy, so try to dry clothes outside or get an old fashioned clothes horse. Aim not to use radiators for drying clothes as this stops them heating your home and can encourage mould.

#### Cooking:

- Microwaves / air-fryers / slow cookers use a lot less energy than an oven
- Turn on the oven less – batch cook if possible, or just cook two meals together
- Turn down your stove top with lids on your pans – saves energy and reduces moisture which could be causing damp
- Only boil as much water as you need in your kettle

### 7. Stop wasting heat

Whether you feel warm in your home depends on how hot the air is, so anything that moves too much air in or out of your home will be wasting heat:

- don't leave outside doors open
- if a room is too hot turn the heating down don't just open a window (sounds daft but we do it!)
- heat your room not your furniture – move furniture away from radiators
- in winter let the sun in to warm your rooms during the day and close your curtains to keep the warmth in when the sun sets
- in summer close your curtains to keep the sun's heat out during the day

### 8. It all adds up

With so many lights in our homes, in total they use considerable energy:

- switch off lights when you leave a room
- switch off external lights unless they have motion detectors

While a mobile phone charging when its battery is full is only using a small amount of energy it is still using energy:

- switch off your charger when your phone is full, saves energy and preserves battery life
- TVs / monitors / computers / printers turn off at the wall – they use power on standby otherwise
- if you want to check if something is on standby then feel if it is at all warm – a toaster is using no energy when not operating, so no need to switch off at the wall, but a plugged in computer charger is so will feel a little warm to the touch

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