

Cold weather health advice and keeping neighbours in mind

It's important to keep warm to stay as healthy as possible during the colder winter months. If you have an elderly or vulnerable friend or neighbour, look out for them to make sure they are safe, warm and well.

Precautions to take

Colder weather can cause a range of health problems but you can be ready for them.

[Keeping warm](#) is important – always keep the main rooms in your home, such as the living room and bedroom, heated. Warm clothing and a hot meal can also help prevent the most vulnerable people falling ill this winter.

It can help prevent colds, [flu](#) or more serious health conditions such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia, and depression.

Also, anyone who is invited to get the [flu vaccination](#) should do so.

There are a few easy precautions you can take to keep you and your loved ones safe during a spell of particularly cold weather:

- wear warm clothes – layers are best, including a hat
- if outside in icy conditions, wear boots or shoes with suitable grips
- make sure you have enough food and medicines
- check the weather forecast regularly
- take care outdoors, especially if roads and pavements are icy
- take regular hot drinks and food
- heat all rooms used during the day – living room to around 18-21°C (65-70°F) and the rest of your house to at least 16°C (61°F)
- if you can't heat all your rooms, make sure that you keep one room warm throughout the day
- if you use an electric blanket check what type it is – some are designed only to warm the bed before you get in and should not be used throughout the night
- never use an electric blanket and hot water bottle together as it could cause electrocution
- service boilers and appliances annually by a registered engineer to protect from the [dangers of carbon monoxide](#)
- keep in contact with trusted callers, friends and relatives should you need help and keep your mobile phone charged

You should also find useful information and advice on the following pages:

If you are worried during the winter and need help, contact or speak to a friend, relative, trusted caller or health professional. They will make sure

that your needs or concerns are brought to the attention of someone who can help.

Using the health service

Should you or someone in your family become unwell this winter, think carefully about how to use health services.

Emergency and 999 services are for life-threatening and serious conditions.

Emergency Departments are the right place to go if you're injured or think you or a loved one is seriously ill.

The [A to Z symptom checker](#), pharmacist, minor injury unit, GP, and out-of-hours services are available for any other health concerns you may have.

If you get a repeat prescription, leave yourself enough time to order and collect it in advance from your GP.

More useful links

[Consider joining NIE Networks and NI Water care registers](#)

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Older people and people with a medical condition or disability should consider joining the NI Water and Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) Networks care registers. The registers help to identify people who need extra help or support if there is an interruption to supply.

NI Water Customer Care Register

People who join the [NI Water](#) Customer Care Register can get a range of free additional services if they are an older person, have a serious medical condition, or need extra help for any other reason.

The full range of services provided to people on the register is outlined at the following link:

You can join the register by phone:

NIE Networks Critical Care Register

[NIE Networks](#) offers a critical care information service to people who are dependent on life-supporting electrical equipment.

Anyone on this register will receive up-to-date information by phone during a power cut or a planned interruption of supply.

You can find out more, including how to register, at this link:

Details of a relative, neighbour or friend can also be given to NIE Networks as an alternative contact.

More useful links

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[Slow down and stay safer on the road](#)

Going too fast for the conditions is the number one cause of people being killed or seriously injured on our roads. Drivers and riders are urged to slow down.

Speeding is no accident

Driving or riding too fast is no accident, it's a decision to drive faster than road and traffic conditions allow. It is also a decision to drive beyond your capabilities.

Unfortunately if you have an accident when driving too fast, you are much less likely to walk away from it unscathed.

[Speed limits](#) are set as an absolute maximum – the weather and conditions need to be taken into consideration when driving on any road.

Speed does not need to be high to kill or seriously injure.

Keeping safe

We all have a personal responsibility to drive or ride in a way that keeps

ourselves and others safe.

Every one mph reduction in average speeds causes, on average, a five percent reduction in collisions. This could be the difference between life and death.

Everyone shares the responsibility to prevent deaths and injuries.

Drivers and riders need to:

- slow down
- pay greater attention to their surroundings
- never drive or ride a motorbike after drinking or taking drugs

Whether you're a driver or passenger, always wear a seatbelt.

Pedestrians and cyclists also need to:

- be aware of their surroundings
- make every effort to be seen by wearing reflective or hi-vis clothing

You can get more information about road safety at the page below:

The faster the speed, the bigger the mess. Please slow down – one life lost is one too many.

It is better to arrive late and alive, than to not arrive at all.

More useful links

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[Dealing with issue of bullying](#)

It's Anti-Bullying Week (13 to 17 November). This year the theme is 'All equal, All different, All together'. We all have a duty to both tackle bullying and support those who have been affected.

Stopping bullying

Bullying is an issue which can happen to anyone. It can take many forms, from physical and verbal attacks to cyber bullying.

Whether you or someone you know is being bullied, there are things you can do to stop it happening.

The first thing that you should do is tell someone about it – don't suffer in silence. You can tell a friend, a parent, a teacher if it's happening at

school, or a senior member of staff if it's a problem in work.

The following pages have useful information:

If you're doing the bullying

You may think teasing people at school or work is a bit of harmless fun, but for the victim it can be no fun at all.

Try to talk to someone at school or work and explain the reasons behind your bullying. They should be able to give you support and advice about how to stop.

Cyberbullying

There has been an increase in people being threatened, teased or embarrassed through their mobile phone, tablet device or the internet, including while using social networking sites or apps.

You can find out more about it on the pages below:

Cyberbullying is just as harmful as bullying in the real world. If you see it happening, report it. Don't ignore it.

More useful links

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[Be aware of dangers from carbon monoxide](#)

People are reminded to be aware of the dangers from carbon monoxide (CO), a highly poisonous gas which is impossible to see, taste or smell and is often known as the 'silent killer'.

Regular checks and services

If you use an appliance that is fuelled with gas, oil, coal, kerosene, peat or wood you are potentially at risk from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide may accumulate to dangerous and even deadly levels in homes, cars or poorly-ventilated areas.

The best way to protect yourself, and others, from the dangers of carbon

monoxide is to make sure all fuel-burning appliances are installed, maintained and used properly.

They should be checked and serviced at least annually by a registered engineer.

All chimneys and flues should be inspected once a year and swept, if required, by a registered technician.

This also applies to any appliances you use in holiday homes, caravans and on board boats where faulty gas cookers, appliances or petrol-powered generators have led to carbon monoxide poisoning.

The following pages have useful information about gas safety and how to arrange getting an appliance serviced:

Carbon monoxide alarm

As an additional precaution, you should also install an audible carbon monoxide alarm.

These alarms have a limited life span, so if you already have one please check it to see if it is working properly. It might be time to buy a new one.

While carbon monoxide alarms can help alert you to the dangers if CO gas escapes, they must never be regarded as a substitute for the proper installation, maintenance, servicing and cleaning of appliances.

Carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms

[Carbon monoxide poisoning](#) can be fatal and can also cause long-term health problems if people are exposed to low doses over a long period of time.

Early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can seem like many common ailments and may easily be confused with food poisoning, viral infections, flu (but without a raised temperature) or simple tiredness.

Signs to look out for include:

- headaches
- nausea and vomiting
- exhaustion
- drowsiness
- dizziness and light-headedness
- flu-like symptoms
- palpitations (feeling heart beat oddly)
- chest pain
- losing consciousness

Anyone who suspects they may be experiencing carbon monoxide poisoning should:

- immediately turn off all appliances
- go outside
- seek medical help

Further information on carbon monoxide can be found on the [Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland website](#).

More useful links