



**Alzheimer  
Scotland**  
Action on Dementia

# Top tips for Wintering Well

# Hello and welcome

Winter is now upon us – the time of year when it can be tempting to baton down the hatches and hibernate until the spring sunshine reemerges.

It can be a wonderful time with lots of festivities, socialising with family, and making more time for rest. But winter can also bring its challenges, and we know that for some people, it can be a very difficult season.

Daylight hours are fewer, and the cold weather can make it tricky to get out and do the things we enjoy. The temptation to stay indoors can lead to us feeling isolated, and we can all feel a bit flat once the festivities are over. There are practical issues to consider too, such as making sure your home and car are ready for the drop in temperatures.

It's most important that you stay warm and healthy over the coming months, so we've pulled together this guide to help you prepare. Full of useful tips to help you plan for the months ahead, we've also included some ideas to help lift your mood if you're feeling a bit down, useful signposts for further support, and practical advice to make sure you 'winter well' this year.



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## Stay warm

As we age, colder weather can have a bigger impact on our health, so when the temperatures drop, it is important to make sure we stay warm – both at home and when we venture outdoors. We've pulled together the following tips to help you stay warm this winter:

### At home

Try to heat your home to an even and comfortable temperature that can be maintained in the rooms you use most. These will usually be the living room, kitchen and bedroom. To maximise efficiency, avoid heating rooms you don't use.

Making some simple changes to your home can improve how heat is retained. Here are some tips to help keep your home warm in the colder weather:

- If you can, **add thermal linings to your curtains** and keep them open during the day so that any outdoor warmth can be let in. Closing them fully at night will help retain that warmth, along with any heat generated by central heating, fireplaces, heated floors, or electric heaters.
- **Minimise draughts.** As daylight fades, temperatures drop further so it's wise to shut out any draughts by closing windows and internal doors. Draught excluders can be helpful to stop cold air from entering a room. This improves energy efficiency by helping to keep the room warm and reducing heating costs.
- **Insulate pipework.** This can improve heat retention around pipes and act as a moisture barrier, which can help prevent frozen pipes in extreme temperatures. Protecting your pipework can improve the thermal efficiency of your home and lower overall energy consumption.
- **Bleed your radiators.** Over time, air can become trapped in your radiators, leading to cold spots which can prevent them from heating efficiently. If you don't bleed the issue will get worse, and you may lose heat altogether.



- **Use rugs on hard floors such as wood, tiles or laminate.** Hard flooring doesn't retain heat as well or feel as warm underfoot as carpet. Rugs offer added warmth and can be moved once the weather changes.
- **Try a heated blanket** or throw to help keep you warm. These are widely available to buy and are cost-effective to run.
- **Use a hot water bottle** as an inexpensive and comforting way to stay warm. You could try placing one under your duvet before going to sleep for added warmth. However, take care when filling with boiling water to avoid the risk of scalds. And never use one at the same time as a heated blanket.
- **Keep moving.** Try to move your body at least every hour. If walking is difficult, you could try some seated exercises to get your blood pumping.
- **Fuel your body.** Eat warm meals, have hot drinks and snack regularly throughout the day to help you maintain energy levels.



### Out and about

- **Wear several layers of clothes.** A tight fitting long sleeved base layer like a thermal vest, and leggings or tights for your legs helps trap heat and keep you warm. Wear as many layers of thin clothing as comfortable rather than fewer thick ones. Natural fibres such as wool and cotton are best.
- **Avoid getting wet** if you're out in bad weather. If you do get wet, change into dry clothes as quickly as possible.

If you are struggling to keep warm, Home Energy Scotland has funds available to help you with things like replacing or upgrading your heating and hot water, draught proofing, insulation and installing heat pumps.

Their 'Warmer Homes Scotland' initiative is a Scottish Government funded scheme to help owner occupiers and private sector tenants who are struggling to heat their homes. To find out if they can help you, call **0808 808 2282** or visit **[www.homeenergyscotland.org/warmer-homes-scotland](http://www.homeenergyscotland.org/warmer-homes-scotland)**



## Our Centres are here to help

We know that energy and other costs of living remain a worry for many people. And with the further loss of winter fuel payments for older people this year, we understand that heating costs may be worrying you.

Alzheimer Scotland has 26 Brain Health and Dementia Resource Centres that are here to welcome you all year round. Throughout winter, you will find a warm space, a warm welcome and a cuppa – and we will continue to deliver our schedule of groups and activities.

Our Centres are also open when no groups are running so feel free to drop in with a friend or family member. To find out more about how we can help, or for more information about what's on at your local Centre, visit [www.alzscot.org/drc](http://www.alzscot.org/drc), or contact Alzheimer Scotland's National Dementia Advisor Service on **0300 373 5774**.

## Hypothermia

In extreme cold temperatures, hypothermia is a risk for all of us. It is a medical emergency that needs to be treated by a doctor. Pay close attention for signs of hypothermia which include:

- shivering
- pale, cold and dry skin
- slurred speech
- slow breathing
- tiredness or confusion

### Tips to avoid hypothermia:

- dress in layers rather than a single heavyweight item
- if at home, cover up with blankets and wear socks and slippers
- if out and about, wear a weatherproof jacket
- it's a good idea to wear a warm hat – 30% of heat is lost through the head
- scarves and gloves offer extra protection
- drink plenty of fluids and warm drinks

### If you are concerned that you, or someone else may be suffering from hypothermia:

- move them, or yourself, indoors or somewhere warmer as quickly as you can
- remove any wet clothing, and use blankets or towels to cover the body, including the head
- if possible, drink something warm and eat something sweet, like chocolate
- try to stay awake, or if you are with someone who you are concerned about, try to keep them awake until help arrives

(source: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hypothermia>)

## Stay well: Healthy eating

We've considered the importance of keeping our homes warm during the winter months but it is equally important to fuel our bodies so we can stay as healthy as possible.

Making good food choices helps ensure our brain gets the nutrients it needs and supports our immune system to defend us against infection. With common viruses such as colds, flu and Covid-19 circulating more readily during the winter, this becomes even more important. We also know that in general, a balanced diet is vital to maintain a healthy body weight and to avoid conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes, which can affect brain health.

Research suggests that a Mediterranean diet can help minimise the impact of chronic illnesses and increase life expectancy. This is based on a variety of foods such as:

- fruits
- vegetables
- extra virgin olive oil
- wholegrain breads and cereals
- legumes or beans (e.g., chickpeas, kidney beans and lentils)
- nuts and seeds
- fish and seafood

### Eat well to support your mental health

Keeping ourselves well nourished during the winter is an important part of protecting our mental health. However, we understand that many people are facing difficult financial struggles which may have an impact on the type of food you are able to buy.

If you are finding it hard to buy the food you need, you are not alone. Contact Citizens Advice for more information on the organisations that can help at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/food-bank/using-a-food-bank](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/food-bank/using-a-food-bank)

Or contact our 24 hour Freephone Dementia Helpline on **0808 808 3000**

Eating a balance of these foods is also known to help with the reduction of cardiovascular diseases and cognitive decline. We've pulled together the following tips to help ensure that your winter diet offers the right balance of sustenance and nutrition:

- **Eat regularly.** Long spells without food can lead to low mood and tiredness.
- **Maintain a good intake of fruit and vegetables** during the winter months. Frozen options have equal nutritional value, are often more reasonably priced, and can be stored for long periods in our freezers for long periods. Fruit and vegetables contain a good balance of vitamins and minerals to keep our brains and bodies healthy. **Healthy fats** found in oily fish, milk, eggs, nuts and seeds to support brain health.
- **Include high fibre foods** such as wholemeal bread, cereals, and fruit like bananas and prunes to lower the risk of constipation. This is even more important if you're not able to leave the house often to exercise.
- **Stay hydrated.** We all know that it's important to stay hydrated during the summer, but it's equally important to maintain these habits during winter. Dehydration can cause significant health problems, especially for older people, so it's a good idea to keep a bottle of water with you to sip from. Aim for 6 – 8 cups per day of a variety of drinks, such as water, fruit juices, diluting squash, soup, tea and coffee and remember, even mild dehydration can have a big impact on how you feel.
- **Try one-pot meals such as casseroles** rather than cooking ingredients separately. This is quicker, can be more energy efficient and means you'll have less washing up to do.





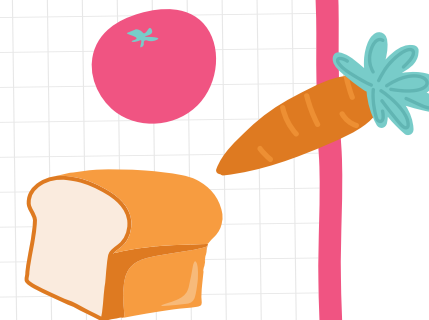
- **Try to avoid too many processed foods** Ready meals often contain additives, preservatives and higher levels of salt which we know is associated with high blood pressure and an increased risk of heart attacks and strokes. They are convenient and don't have to be ruled out altogether, but try to moderate how often you eat them.
- **Try to eat at least one hot meal every day.** This doesn't have to be a big plate – a bowl of soup is nutritious and is inexpensive to make at home or buy from a shop.
- **Try to plan your meals.** Batch cooking can help during the winter. Planning your meals minimises food waste, and especially in the colder months when our energy costs are higher, cooking in batches can help save money.
- **Be careful of portion sizes.** When it's cold and dark outside, it can be tempting to comfort eat, especially over the festive period. But as we also tend to spend more time indoors and less time being active over the winter, we should be mindful of eating too many unhealthy snacks.
- **Include vitamin D.** This is essential for keeping bones healthy and is found in foods like oily fish such as salmon and sardines. If you are not likely to get vitamin D from your food, it is recommended you take a supplement containing between 7 and 10 micrograms every day. For more information, visit the NHS website at [www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d)

It's a good idea to be prepared for the winter by keeping a well-stocked supply of essentials in case of extreme cold temperatures or icy surfaces which might make it dangerous to go outside. Here are some suggestions:

## Shopping List:

### For the freezer:

- bread
- vegetables
- fruit
- meat
- fish
- batch cooked meals



### For the cupboards:

- tinned fruit and vegetables
- dried fruit
- tinned soup
- pasta and rice
- crackers and biscuits
- cereals and porridge oats
- tinned beans and pulses, such as lentils
- tinned fish such as sardines
- tea, coffee, hot chocolate



For more information about eating well at home, please visit:

[www.alzscot.org/eating-well-at-home](http://www.alzscot.org/eating-well-at-home)

[www.alzscot.org/tips-for-eating-and-drinking-booklet](http://www.alzscot.org/tips-for-eating-and-drinking-booklet)

## Stay well: Enjoy alcohol safely

The festive season is something many of us look forward to, but it can also be a difficult time – with special meals to prepare and guests to entertain. For people with dementia, and their partners and families, there can be extra challenges – established routines might be disrupted during this time, you might have to deal with unfamiliar environments and manage without the full range of support services.

Food and drink play an important part in most people's celebrations and during this season, it's more likely that we will enjoy a glass of wine with our meals, or celebratory whisky or sherry. However, alcohol should be consumed in moderation and people with alcohol-related dementia should avoid it altogether. Be aware that some people may be unable to drink alcohol because of medication they are taking or because they have a health condition which makes them more susceptible to the effects of alcohol.

Our balance also tends to get worse as we get older, so be aware that even a small amount of alcohol may make you more unsteady on your feet and more likely to fall. Check with your doctor if there are any foods you should avoid or if there are any other reasons why you should not consume alcohol.

### Alcohol and cold weather

It can be more dangerous to drink alcohol outdoors – if you're enjoying an outside celebration, for example. When we drink alcohol, our blood vessels send more blood to our skin which can cause us to feel warm or flushed.

However, this process is pulling heat away from the centre of our bodies which can lower our temperature. We might feel warmer temporarily, but our body heat is escaping more quickly.

If you have a heart condition, you should take extra care if drinking alcohol in cold weather because a drop in body temperature can lead to an increased heart rate and other problems.



### Stay hydrated

It's also important to drink plenty of water if you're enjoying a celebratory drink. Alcohol acts as a diuretic, meaning you'll need to use the bathroom more often. (source: [www.drinkaware.co.uk/general-health-effects](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/general-health-effects)) If you're not drinking enough water, this can quickly lead to you becoming dehydrated. In the winter, it can be harder to spot the signs of dehydration because we're less likely to feel thirsty in colder weather. However, our bodies still need plenty of fluids, so it can be a good idea to alternate between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks to make sure your body gets what it needs.



### Stay warm

If you do enjoy an alcoholic drink at an outdoors event this winter, be prepared before you go. Be aware of the dangers of cold weather and be mindful of the effects alcohol can have. If you begin to feel warm, you might be tempted to remove your coat or gloves – but the combination of feeling warm while being more exposed to the cold can increase the risk of hypothermia.

Dress appropriately for the weather so that your body is more able to regulate its temperature – it can be a good idea to wear several thinner layers underneath an outdoor coat, rather than a single heavy weight jumper.

For more information about the effects of alcohol, or for more support and advice, please visit:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse/risks/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse/risks/)

[www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice-and-support/](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice-and-support/)

[www.alzscot.org/our-work/dementia-support/information-sheets/korsakoffs-syndrome](http://www.alzscot.org/our-work/dementia-support/information-sheets/korsakoffs-syndrome)

## Stay well: Protecting your mental health

For some people, the shorter days, colder temperatures and darker evenings signal a cosy time of year, when staying indoors brings thoughts of contentment and a chance to relax with friends and family. But not everyone feels this way. For many, winter can be a very challenging time, and the colder months can have a negative impact on mood and motivation. It's common to feel worn out by cold, dark days – more tired, less active and less inclined to keep up with positive habits established in the milder months.

There are several reasons we can feel this way:

- **Less sunlight**, short winter days mean that we are exposed to less vitamin D – a key contributor to better mood and healthier sleep patterns. When our bodies are less able to absorb vitamin D, we're more likely to experience a dip in mood, feel a bit lazier, and not sleep as well as at other times.
- **Less exercise** can cause us to feel sluggish and demotivated. If we're used to participating in regular exercise, it can feel disheartening when the cold weather stops us from getting involved. Dark, cold, rainy evenings when we might otherwise head out for a walk, or pavements covered in ice, can prevent us from safely venturing outside. Staying indoors can be tempting but in the longer-term, we deprive our bodies of the dopamine hormone, known to make us feel happier and more uplifted.
- **Money worries** can affect us all during winter. Pressure associated with the expense of heating our homes and cooking hot meals is exacerbated by the cost of buying presents and catering for festive visitors. This can quickly spiral out of control and feel overwhelming.
- **Loneliness** is more likely to occur during winter, as we spend more time indoors and change our normal routines due to poor weather or seasonal closures. This can mean we're less likely to meet up with friends or do the things we'd normally do to maintain connections with others.



However, there are steps we can take to minimise the impact of these 'winter blues':

**Vitamin D vitality:** Even though there's a lot less sunshine around during the winter months, it is still possible to find vitamin D. Exposure to natural daylight can lift our mood and energy levels, so getting outside, even if the sun isn't shining, can be helpful. This doesn't have to be for long, just ten minutes can have a positive impact. If it's too cold, or if slippery pavements would make it dangerous, make sure you open all your blinds and curtains to fill your home with natural light. If it's a dull day, bright indoor lamps and ceiling lights can help us to feel more awake and alert.

**Exercise:** Despite the cold temperatures, it is still possible to exercise during winter. In fact, exercising in cold weather can bring benefits for your general health – improving core body strength, flexibility, balance and resilience. It can also aid sleep – and both regular exercise and healthy sleep patterns are known to be good for our brain health. However, if you have a heart condition it is important that you take extra care. Cold weather can increase your heart rate and blood pressure and make our hearts work harder to regulate our temperature. For more detailed information, visit The British Heart Foundation website at: [www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/practical-support/will-cold-weather-affect-my-heart-condition](http://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/practical-support/will-cold-weather-affect-my-heart-condition). There are many options for winter exercise – see p.11 for more information and ideas about how to bring the outdoors in.





**Sleep well:** It's easy to feel disoriented on winter mornings, with dark skies tricking us into thinking we should sleep for longer. And while it is important to get enough sleep to help our bodies build resilience, too much sleep can be bad for us. It can upset the structure of our day and become a vicious cycle, with too much sleep leading to feelings of lethargy and demotivation. Drinking a glass of water when we wake is a good way to start the day – this will refresh us and help to detoxify our systems.

Aim for 8 hours' sleep every night to maintain a good routine. Try closing the curtains and blinds around dusk, have warm, milky drinks before bed rather than caffeine, and dim the lights so you settle into a mood for sleep.

**Stay connected:** With cold and dark weather tempting us to stay indoors, contact with friends and family can become much less frequent. Some services may close over winter, leaving you at a loose end when you'd otherwise be out and about. Try to avoid going into 'hibernation mode', as our brains need interaction with others to stay healthy. If you can, and it's safe to do so, keep your plans to meet friends. If you'd rather not venture out, why not invite them to visit you for a coffee? Or, if you're worried about winter bugs circulating, you could try meeting by video call so you can have a chat and see the person's face at the same time. To find out more about activities that can be carried out with others or on your own, please visit [www.cpcs.online](http://www.cpcs.online). This website was designed to help you embed health promoting activities into your daily routine.

**Be mindful:** The power of self-care is important. This is about taking extra care of ourselves to stay strong – physically and emotionally. There are lots of ways to do this, including:

- **Journalling** – you could use the winter months to start a journal, taking some time each day to write down how you are thinking and feeling as a way of clearing your mind. There is no right or wrong way to do this, and many people find it a very creative and therapeutic process. You could start your own journal from scratch or use a shop-bought version which come in lots of designs and styles.
- **Meditation** – taking some time out of your day, every day, to reflect and be calm can have enormous health benefits. For more information on how to meditate, visit [www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-meditate-for-beginners](http://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-meditate-for-beginners)



We can all feel down from time to time, but this is not the same as depression. Depression is a condition that can last for a prolonged period and cause feelings that dominate your life. If you feel sad, hopeless or have lost interest in things you used to enjoy, you should seek help.

If you, or one of your loved ones, is living with dementia and is feeling stressed, depressed or anxious, it is important that you seek help. Contact your GP for further advice, or visit:

[www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services)

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

Or you can call our 24 hour Freephone Helpline on **0808 808 3000**

## Stay connected

Our brain thrives on company and benefits greatly from the stimulation of interaction with other people. If you continue to learn and challenge yourself mentally throughout winter, you can help maintain your brain's resilience.

Being socially active has considerable benefits for your physical, emotional and mental health, as well as your general wellbeing – especially during the winter months. If you are living with dementia, it can make managing your condition much easier and, in some cases, can help slow its progression. That's why it's important not to let your social connections fall by the wayside when the temperatures start to drop.

It might take more planning to do the things you'd like to do – but it's still possible, so don't let that put you off. It's important that you continue to do all the things you enjoy, even if it means doing them indoors instead of outdoors.

### Bring the outdoors in

There are many ways to continue doing the things you enjoy during winter. For example, if you enjoy walking outdoors, you could adapt your plans when the weather is bad by walking indoors – perhaps in a leisure centre or around your home. If you like gardening with friends, you could try bringing the outdoors in by doing some crafts using materials from your garden, or some flower arranging.

If you'd normally socialise through outdoor exercise, you could vary your plans during the winter by going for a swim during quiet pool times or joining a yoga or gentle exercise class. Most leisure centres offer a wide range of activities suitable for all interests and abilities, so it's worth getting in touch to ask about their timetable.

These types of activities will not only help you to stay physically fit, but they will also enable you to socialise and stay connected. Both are known to improve memory and reasoning skills so are great pastimes to build into your routine.



## Try something new

It can also be beneficial to try something you've never done before – picking up new skills and hobbies can help stimulate your brain. Perhaps you could use some time over the winter to start learning a new language or a musical instrument – in a group setting, or maybe with a friend. This will help to keep you motivated while being in the company of others.

However, we understand that these things aren't always easy – and bad weather or living in a rural location can make it harder to participate in groups like this. If you do live somewhere remote where transport is difficult, or if you'd prefer to avoid group settings and the circulation of winter bugs, you could try joining an online group. These can be very valuable – offering information and advice, providing support and encouragement, as well as being a source of connection and a way to pursue interests from the comfort of your home.

There are some things to bear in mind, though. Be aware that people in online communities may have different symptoms to you, be at a later stage of their condition or even live in another country. Try not to assume that you'll have the same experiences, either good or bad. If you do get involved with online communities, tell someone you trust to ensure you stay safe. Never give your personal information out to someone online.

Getting involved as a volunteer or charity fundraiser can also expand your social circle. This can help maintain your skills and give you an opportunity to put your experience to good use, too. For more ideas of health promoting activities you can try, visit: [www.cpcs.online](http://www.cpcs.online) and [www.brainhealth.scot/stayconnected](http://www.brainhealth.scot/stayconnected)

If you are feeling lonely this winter or are interested in what's going on in your local area, contact your local Dementia Advisor or call our Helpline on **0808 808 3000**.



**To help you keep moving this winter, why not try one or more of the following:**

**Go for a walk** – You don't have to walk far, but walking regularly is one of the best and easiest ways to stay active. Just ten minutes each day can have important benefits for our physical and mental health.

**Join a yoga class** – Yoga is a gentle exercise that can help with relaxation and calmness, as well as balance and flexibility. It offers physical activity for the body, it works the brain and is a useful tool to deal with stress, anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed.

**Go swimming** – If you have problems with your joints, poor mobility, or if you'd rather not walk far in cold temperatures, swimming is a great alternative. It offers refreshing but gentle and effective exercise, increasing your flexibility and range of motion. It can increase stamina by giving your heart a workout and is also very good for the brain. Swimming can be a great social activity too, with most public pools offering a variety of classes each week.

**Try a dance class**, either in a local leisure or community centre or even at home. Dance can be a fun and enjoyable way to move your body and is known to improve mood. It also has great physical benefits, such as improving muscle strength and balance. It can be a very creative pastime, when we can express ourselves to music.

**Chair exercises** can help with muscle strength and balance and is great for anyone whose mobility makes it difficult to exercise while standing. The intensity can be increased or decreased according to what you can manage, allowing you to exercise indoors. You could do this from the comfort of your own home, or by joining a class for a more social experience. Contact your local Brain Health & Dementia Resource Centre to find out if there are any classes near you.

For more information and suggestions for exercising with dementia, please visit:

[www.alzscot.org/physical-activity-and-exercise-ideas-for-people-with-dementia](http://www.alzscot.org/physical-activity-and-exercise-ideas-for-people-with-dementia)

[www.alzscot/physical-activity-at-home](http://www.alzscot/physical-activity-at-home)



## Stay safe: Getting out and about safely

### Walking

Physical activity has considerable health benefits all year round but surprisingly, these can be even greater in cold weather. Colder temperatures can stimulate our immune responses, helping us to fight infections.

Taking a brisk walk on a cold day can also greatly aid our mental health, helping to reduce stress and anxiety. Breathing in fresh air is good for us, and exposure to daylight boosts the production of 'happy hormones' like serotonin, which can improve wellbeing and our overall mood. Studies suggest that contact with the natural world can offer comfort, stimulation and a sense of freedom so there's no doubt that winter-time activity can also bring a lot of enjoyment.

However, it is important to take great care when out and about during the colder months. For those who have chronic lung conditions, it is not advisable to spend a lot of time in cold air. This is because it is also often dry, which can cause irritation in the airways. (source: [www.lung.org/blog/weather-and-your-lungs](http://www.lung.org/blog/weather-and-your-lungs))

Here are some tips to stay safe when out and about on foot this winter:

- Dress according to the temperature – if it's cold, layer up. Hats, scarves and gloves offer extra protection.
- Avoid venturing out if it is icy, or if there has been snowfall. Pavements will be slippery, and it can be very easy to fall.
- Wear suitable footwear with a sturdy grip. Lightweight shoes with smooth soles will make walking on slippery surfaces treacherous, so avoid these if you can.
- Be seen! Wear a high-visibility item of clothing if you venture out when it's dark. This could be an over-jacket, or even a reflective arm band or a hat with a spotlight.
- If you wear glasses, don't leave home without them. If darkness falls, it's important that you can see the path ahead clearly, including potential hazards such as kerbs, uneven surfaces or potholes.
- Avoid walking over piles of snow or low-traffic paths that might be covered in black ice. It is safer to walk along a grassy verge if you can.
- Look ahead when you're walking, try not to be distracted by mobile phones.
- Avoid walking alone in the dark. Going out with a friend or in a group is not only a social activity, but it can also mean that hazards are more likely to be spotted.



## Driving

If you are likely to be travelling by car this winter, it's important to stay safe. Road conditions can change suddenly and significantly, and even if you are not the driver, the following information might be useful:

Make sure the car is 'winter ready', with winter tyres and an 'emergency kit' in the boot, including: de-icer, ice scraper, a torch, extra clothing, high visibility vest, spare batteries, a blanket, bottles of drinking water and non-perishable foods.

It's a good idea to refer to official advice concerning your car's safety but in general, you should consider:

- the battery reliability
- tyre tread
- front and rear lights – all bulbs should be fully functioning and there should be no cracks in the covers
- windscreen – there should be no cracks or chips, it must be clean, with adequate fluid in the wiper spray
- roadside assistance – make sure your cover is up to date

For more information on preparing your car for winter, visit [www.theaa.com/cars/advice/top-tips/top-tips-for-winter-driving](http://www.theaa.com/cars/advice/top-tips/top-tips-for-winter-driving)

## Eyesight

It's very important that your eyesight is fit to drive, especially when travelling in the hours of darkness. If you are the driver, your eyes must be able to cope with much lower light levels and oncoming headlights. You must be able to see the road ahead clearly and be able to anticipate potential hazards.

Even if you travel as a passenger, it helps to wear glasses if you usually need them. It can be disorienting to travel without clear vision so it's a good idea to have your eyes checked regularly. For more information, please visit [www.rac.co.uk/drive/advice/learning-to-drive/driving-eyesight-test-what-are-the-requirements](http://www.rac.co.uk/drive/advice/learning-to-drive/driving-eyesight-test-what-are-the-requirements)



# Stay safe: Reduce the risk of trips and falls

## Outdoors

As the temperatures drop, the risk of outdoor ground surfaces becoming slippery increases. And while it's a good idea for us to stay active during the winter months, this means we must take extra care if we're out and about.

There are some important steps we can take to minimise the chances of being hurt:

- Check your eyesight is ready for winter by visiting your optician. With fewer daylight hours and lamp-lit homes, it's important to ensure that you can see clearly to navigate obstacles.
- Check your hearing. Your balance can be affected by a hearing impairment so if you do have any concerns about your hearing, contact your GP who may refer you on to audiology.
- Choose your footwear carefully. Always wear shoes with sturdy grip and ankle support when heading out in cold weather.
- Don't rush. You are more likely to trip or fall if you are trying to get somewhere in a hurry. Plan ahead and allow plenty of time for your journey.
- Be aware of the weather conditions. You could listen to the forecast on the television or radio, or ask Alexa for an update on the weather in your area, if you have one.
- Be prepared. Take a mobile phone with you, or wear an alert system, like a whistle or an alarm so you can attract attention if you do slip or fall.
- Be cautious. If you sense the ground surface is slippery, move slowly and take small steps. If there is a grassy edge, it is safer to walk there.
- Try not to put your hands in your pockets while you're walking. This will help you keep your balance and will help break your fall if you do slip or trip. Wear thermal gloves to keep your hands warm.



- Avoid carrying anything heavy that could affect your balance in slippery conditions.
- Keep your head up and eyes forward while out walking, it can be distracting to look at incoming phone calls or text messages.
- If you use a walking stick or Zimmer frame, make sure the rubber tread has enough grip.

## Indoors

When it's cold outside, it's tempting to bundle up inside – which can mean more blankets, rugs and extra bedding. However, these can become trip hazards so remember to:

- Tuck in the edges of blankets and make sure they're not trailing on the floor.
- Make sure the corners of rugs are secured flat to the floor surface. Curled edges can easily be tripped over, causing injury. Use a non-slip layer underneath the rug to prevent avoidable accidents
- Ensure the room is adequately and evenly lit so you can see a clear path from one area to another. Use brighter bulbs so you can see clearly.
- Tidy away any trailing cables, perhaps from extra lighting or for Christmas decorations.
- Try to minimise clutter. Too many objects lying around can become a danger when moving around the house.

For more information on how to avoid trips and falls, visit [www.publichealthscotland.scot/publications/up-and-about-taking-positive-steps-to-avoid-trips-and-falls/](http://www.publichealthscotland.scot/publications/up-and-about-taking-positive-steps-to-avoid-trips-and-falls/)

### If you do fall, try to stay calm.

If you can, use your mobile phone to call for help, or activate your alarm if you have one. If you are with someone but can't get up, ask them to help you get into a comfortable position until help arrives.

Visit our dedicated website, ADAM (About Digital and Me), to find out about technology aids that could help you:

[www.meetadam.org](http://www.meetadam.org)

## Stay safe: Power cuts and fire safety

### Power cuts

During the winter season, the chance of experiencing a power cut increases. They don't happen often but when they do it can be inconvenient, so it helps to be prepared. Generally caused by unforeseen circumstances such as extreme weather, your local network will work as quickly as possible to restore power.

In the meantime, having a well-stocked emergency kit will help with basic tasks until your power comes back on. This might include items such as:

- a torch
- a battery-powered radio
- a fully charged mobile phone
- battery powered charger for a mobile phone
- a list of useful telephone numbers
- candles and a lighter/ box of matches
- a first aid kit
- spare keys
- a spare pair of glasses if you need them
- any prescribed medication
- ready to eat food, such as tinned foods, biscuits or crackers
- toiletries
- dried pet food if required

Utility companies connect with local authorities to make sure you have the support you need as quickly as possible during any interruption to your supply. You should contact your supplier if you are:

- living with dementia or are a carer
- have a disability such as a visual impairment or a hearing difficulty
- of pensionable age



This will enable you to sign up for priority services, which is free and doesn't require you to show proof of age, condition or circumstances. If at any point you switch power suppliers, you will have to re-register. You will be issued with a dedicated phone number which you should call in the event of a power cut. For more information, visit [www.thepsr.co.uk](http://www.thepsr.co.uk)



If you do lose power during the hours of darkness, it is recommended that you use a torch for light, rather than candles. Only use candles as a last resort to minimise the risk of fire. More information can be found at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-in-the-winter/](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-in-the-winter/)

It's also a good idea to unplug all appliances until power is restored. This will remove the risk of power surges causing any damage.

### Fire safety

At a time of year when we are more likely to use portable heaters, heated blankets and light fires and candles, it's more important than ever to be aware of the risks of fire.

#### If you light an open fire:

- Use a fire guard to protect yourself and furnishings from hot embers and sparks.
- Make sure chimneys and flues are clean and well maintained.
- Fit carbon monoxide and smoke alarms throughout your home.

#### If you use portable heaters:

- Never place them near curtains, fabrics or close to items of furniture.
- Never place clothes or any other object over the heater or obstruct the flow of heat.
- Ensure the air can circulate fully around the room, and that there is adequate ventilation.
- Try securing them to a wall to prevent them falling onto carpets or soft furnishings.
- Remember to unplug electric heaters when you leave the house or go to bed.

**If you use heated blankets:**

- Test them regularly, at least every three years - your local fire service may be able to offer advice.
- When not in use, store them flat or loosely fold to avoid damaging the internal wiring.
- Never use hot water bottles in the same bed as an electric blanket.
- Remember to unplug the blanket before you get into bed.
- Always follow manufacturer instructions.



(source: 'Fire Safety in the Winter' booklet, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service offers everyone in Scotland a free home fire safety check. For more information, visit

[www.firescotland.gov.uk/contact-us/home-fire-safety-visits](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/contact-us/home-fire-safety-visits)

**Boiler health**

It's important to make sure your boiler is ready for winter. The easiest way to do this is by arranging a service by a Gas Safe registered engineer. Often, if you have a warranty, this will only remain valid if you have maintained a regular service history.

A service will make sure that your boiler is functioning as efficiently as possible, which will not only safeguard against low temperatures, but will also ensure that your bills are cost effective. If a fault is detected, an engineer will identify this quickly meaning any risks of failure are minimised.

Most gas suppliers provide a boiler check service so it's worthwhile giving them a call to enquire. Details for some of the main suppliers can be found here:

**British Gas:** [www.britishgas.co.uk/cover/boiler-and-heating.html](http://www.britishgas.co.uk/cover/boiler-and-heating.html)

**Scottish Power:** [www.scottishpower.co.uk/home-services/products?filterType=BOILER\\_AND\\_HEATING](http://www.scottishpower.co.uk/home-services/products?filterType=BOILER_AND_HEATING)

**OWO Energy:** [www.ovoenergy.com/annual-boiler-service](http://www.ovoenergy.com/annual-boiler-service)

**EDF Energy:** [www.edfenergy.com/heating/boilers/boiler-cover](http://www.edfenergy.com/heating/boilers/boiler-cover)

**EON Next:** [www.eonnext.com/boilers/boiler-servicing](http://www.eonnext.com/boilers/boiler-servicing)

## Stay healthy

Being cold isn't a nice feeling, and it can worsen symptoms of existing health conditions such as high blood pressure. When it's damp outside, the risk of respiratory illnesses also increases - and as there are a lot more of them in circulation at this time of year, it's important that we take steps to protect our general health.

There are several things we can do to help protect our general health during the colder months:

- **Keep up to date with vaccinations.** If you receive a letter from the NHS inviting you along for a flu or covid booster, try not to miss it. This will help protect yourself and others from these seasonal illnesses.
- **Use good hand hygiene.** This is one of the easiest and most effective ways to avoid transmitting seasonal bugs such as Covid-19, the common cold, flu and Norovirus. According to the NHS, it should take around 40 seconds to thoroughly clean your hands. This is roughly as long as it takes to sing 'Happy Birthday' twice. Basic instructions are to:
  - o apply enough soap to cover both hands
  - o use one hand to rub the back of the other hand and clean in between the fingers - then do the same with the other hand
  - o rub one thumb using the other hand - then do the same with the other thumb
  - o rub the tips of your fingers on the palm of your other hand - then do the same with other hand
  - o rinse your hands with water and dry thoroughly (source: NHS)

**Keep moving!** If the weather permits, it's a good idea to get out and about to keep up your exercise plans. If it's not practical or safe to get out, or if your mobility makes it more difficult, there are still ways to keep moving. Guidance on gentle seated exercises that can be done at home are available on the NHS website here: [www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/)





**Stay warm, day and night** wearing multiple thin layers. Wear socks to bed to retain body heat, and use a hot water bottle or a heated blanket (but never together).

**Have enough medication on hand.** Make sure you have a stock of any medication you need to cover the season, taking into account GP and pharmacy closures over the festive period.

**Eat well.** Make sure you eat a balanced diet with plenty of colour – lots of fruit and vegetables will provide you with the right nutrients to help keep your body healthy.

If you do become unwell over the winter months and you need medical attention, it's best to call your GP in the first instance. If you need medical help out-of-hours, call 111 or visit NHS 111 online at [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)

**If it is an emergency, call 999.**

However, if it is less urgent, and your symptoms can be managed at home, you could contact your local pharmacist for support. General tips for recovering at home include:

- **Ensure good hygiene** as explained above.
- **Remember to drink enough** as even mild dehydration can have serious effects. Water, juices, tea, coffee and soups count towards your fluid intake each day. Making sure you're hydrated can help guard against headaches, nausea and tiredness.
- **Get plenty of rest** Your body needs time to rest and recover if you are unwell. Taking things easy will help you get better more quickly, and good quality sleep is important.

## Alzheimer Scotland Centre Directory

Alzheimer Scotland Brain Health and Dementia Resource Centres	Contact Number
<b>Aberdeen Brain Health &amp; Dementia Resource Centre</b> 13-19 King Street Aberdeen AB24 5AA	01224 644077
<b>Alloa Dementia Resource Centre</b> 2-4 Mill Street Alloa FK10 1DT	01324 559480
<b>Angus Dementia Resource Centre</b> 264 High Street Arbroath DD11 1JE	01241 431770
<b>Bearsden Dementia Resource Centre</b> 49 Milgavie Road Bearsden G61 2DW	0141 946 0966
<b>Borders Dementia Resource Centre</b> 19 Bridge Street Kelso TD5 7HT	01573 400324
<b>Bridgeton Dementia Resource Centre</b> 11 Bridgeton Cross Glasgow G40 1BN	0141 429 6428
<b>Dingwall Dementia Resource Centre</b> Athole Court, High Street Dingwall IV15 9SH	01349 808650
<b>Dumfries Dementia Resource Centre</b> 8 Gordon Street Dumfries DG1 1EG	01387 261303



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**Dundee Dementia Resource Centre** 01382 210200  
9 Morgan Street  
Dundee DD4 6QE

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**Edinburgh Head Office and Dementia Resource Centre** 0131 551 9350  
160 Dundee Street  
Edinburgh EH11 1DQ

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**Fife Dementia Resource Centre** 01592 204541  
Hill Street  
Kirkaldy KY1 1AH

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**Glasgow Brain Health & Dementia Resource Centre** 0141 418 3930  
81 Oxford Street  
Glasgow G5 9EP

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**Helensburgh Brain Health & Dementia Resource Centre** 01436 678050  
23-25 West Princes Street  
Helensburgh G84 8TF

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**Inverclyde Dementia Resource Centre** 01475 261100  
1 Nicol Street  
Greenock PA16 7EN

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**Inverness Brain Health & Dementia Resource Centre** 01463 711707  
2 Strothers Lane  
Inverness IV1 1LR

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**Kilmarnock Brain Health & Dementia Resource Centre** 01563 542621  
8-12 College Wynd  
Kilmarnock KA1 1HN

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**Lanarkshire Brain Health & Dementia Resource Centre (Motherwell)** 01698 275300  
64 Dalziel Street  
Motherwell ML1 1PJ

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**Oban Dementia Resource Centre** 01631 570614  
12 High Street  
Oban PA34 4BG

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**Outdoor Dementia Resource Centre** 07585 976356  
Badaguish Outdoor Centre  
Glenmore  
Aviemore PH22 1AD

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**Perth Brain Health & Dementia Resource Centre** 07467 351246  
7 George Street  
Perth PH1 5JY

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**Shetland Dementia Resource Centre** 01595 720344  
66 Burgh Road  
Lerwick ZE1 0HJ

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**Stranraer Brain Health & Dementia Resource Centre** 01776 889181  
Cromarty House, Sun Street  
Stranraer DG9 7JL

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**Tain Dementia Resource Centre** 01862 894276  
Victoria Road  
Tain IV19 1AU

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**West Dunbartonshire Dementia Resource Centre** 0141 410 5306  
6-8 Miller Street  
Clydebank G81 1UQ

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**West Lothian Brain Health & Dementia Resource Centre (Livingston)** 01506 533108  
Unit 1 Grampian Court  
Beveridge Square  
Livingston EH54 6QF

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**Western Isles Dementia Resource Centre** 01851 702123  
Taigh Shiphort, Sinclair Avenue  
Stornoway HS1 2AP

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## Useful contacts

### Alzheimer Scotland's 24 hour Freephone Dementia Helpline

Our Helpline is there for you day or night, 365 days a year. Our highly skilled team will offer a listening ear and emotional support, provide information and will signpost on to other supports if necessary. Call on **0808 808 3000**. You can also contact our Helpline team via email on [helpline@alzscot.org](mailto:helpline@alzscot.org)

### National Dementia Advisor Service

If you need information, advice or advocacy in dealing with issues relating to dementia, our National Dementia Advisor Service is here to help you. The service is available from 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday, and can help with a wide range of issues. You can call the service on **0300 373 5774** (charged at a local call rate), or email [NDAS@alzscot.org](mailto:NDAS@alzscot.org)

### General Support

<b>Age Scotland Helpline</b>	0800 12 44 222
<b>Care Information Scotland</b>	0800 011 3200
<b>Carers Scotland</b>	0141 378 1065
<b>Citizens Advice Bureaux</b>	0800 028 1456
<b>The Samaritans</b>	0330 094 5717
<b>Women's Aid Helpline</b>	0800 027 1234

### Health

<b>Emergency services</b>	999
<b>NHS Out of Hours Service</b>	111
<b>NHS Emergency Dentist</b>	

Emergency dentistry contacts for all areas of Scotland can be found at [www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/nhs-services/dental/dental-emergencies/](http://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/nhs-services/dental/dental-emergencies/)

<b>Pharmacy services</b>	Details of all pharmacies in Scotland can be found at <a href="http://www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory/pharmacies/">www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory/pharmacies/</a>
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### Travel

<b>ScotRail</b>	0344 811 0141
<b>Scottish Citylink Coaches</b>	0141 352 4444
<b>First Bus</b>	0345 646 0707

### Utilities

<b>British Gas Customer Services:</b>	
Credit customer	0800 0728 625
Pay as You Go customer	0800 294 8604
<b>EDF Energy</b>	0333 200 5100
<b>Eon Energy</b>	0808 501 5200
<b>Npower</b>	0800 073 3000
<b>Octopus Energy</b>	0808 164 1088

### Useful resources

<b>Alzheimer Scotland: Allied Health Professional Resources</b>	<a href="http://www.alzscot.org/ahpresources">www.alzscot.org/ahpresources</a>
<b>CPCS Online</b>	<a href="http://www.cpcs.online">www.cpcs.online</a>
<b>ADAM (About Digital and Me)</b>	<a href="http://www.meetadam.org">www.meetadam.org</a>



**Alzheimer  
Scotland**  
Action on Dementia

**Alzheimer Scotland, 160 Dundee Street, Edinburgh, EH11 1DQ**

Phone: **0131 243 1453** | Email: **info@alzscot.org** | Web: **www.alzscot.org**

X: **@alzscot** | Facebook: **Alzheimer Scotland**

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