

How to stay warm for less

Ways to keep out the cold if you can't afford to turn your heating up

Living in a cold home is bad for our physical and mental health. It can cause serious health conditions, such as strokes, or worsen existing conditions, such as asthma or arthritis.

It is recommended you heat the rooms that you spend most time in to between 18 and 21°C. This should help you avoid damp and ensure you are kept warm enough.

If you feel that you can't afford to do this, this factsheet will walk you through the best ways to save money on energy bills while staying warm.

We will talk about:

1. Heating just one room in the house.
2. Draught-proofing your windows, doors and floors.
3. Wrapping up warm.
4. Staying active to warm yourself up.
5. Using a heated throw, or a blanket or sleeping bag.
6. Having hot food and drink throughout the day.
7. Finding warm places to go near your home.
8. Preventing damp and mould.

1. Prioritise one room to heat

Prioritise heating the room you're going to spend most time in. The smaller the room, the cheaper it will be to heat. Most houses have a room which is usually warmer than others, and it may be sensible to choose this room. Rooms that get a lot of sun are often warmer.

If you have a heat pump, gas, LPG or oil boiler, it's cheaper to use this than a plug-in electric heater. Turn the radiators down in the rooms you're not going to heat as much, using the radiator valves.

Put a reflective panel behind any radiators that are on external walls. These reflect heat back into the room, reducing the amount lost to the outside. They can be bought cheaply online and in DIY stores, and will pay for themselves in one winter.

If you use plug-in electric heaters, place them away from windows and external walls. We advise against portable gas heaters as these are a fire hazard and can make homes damp.

If you have electric night storage heaters, turn them all down apart from the ones you're going to prioritise. See our factsheet to find out more about how to use your night storage heaters. We also have one specifically on Dimplex storage heaters.

2. Get rid of draughts

It's important to make sure the heat you're paying for stays in the space you're heating. On average, 15% of the money someone spends on heating their home is lost to draughts.

Doors

- Keep all the doors in your home closed.
- Hang curtains over external doors.
- Cover keyholes and letter boxes.
- Use draught excluders or rolled up blankets to block gaps under doors. You can attach a draught excluder to the door so you don't trip over it.

Windows

- Use self-adhesive draught-proofing strips to improve the seal of your window frames.
- Add curtain liners or blankets to existing curtains so they keep the heat in better.
- Close the curtains at dusk, and open them in the morning to let the sun warm the room.
- Don't let your curtains cover radiators. Tuck them behind if possible.

Floors and walls

- If you have uncarpeted floors, cover them as much as you can with carpets or rugs. This will be warmer on your feet.
- Draught-proof the room by filling in gaps in your floorboards and skirting boards.

Placing furniture

- Move chairs and sofas away from external walls as sitting near them will be colder.
- Leave a gap of 6 inches or more between furniture and radiators to allow the heat to spread around the room.

See our factsheet on DIY draught-proofing for more tips.

3. Wrap up warm

- Wear thick, warm socks and slippers. Boot-style slippers work best as they cover your feet and ankles.
- Tuck your trousers into your socks or slippers to prevent cold air getting in.
- Wearing a hat, gloves, scarf or coat indoors may make you feel a bit silly, but it will definitely keep you nice and warm.

- Wear lots of layers (for example, leggings, tights or long-johns under your trousers). This will keep you warmer than a single thicker layer.
- Some materials such as wool and fleece are very good at keeping you warm.

4. Move around

- Moving around generates internal heat, and this will help you stay warm, so it's beneficial to break up periods of sitting down with periods of activity.
- Gently walking around your home or on the spot is best. If you do anything too strenuous you'll sweat and this will cool you down.

Many people find going for a walk outside helps them to feel warmer when they get home, and is good for their mental health.

5. Use a heated throw, blanket or sleeping bag

- Heated throws only cost 2p an hour to use. That's just £3.36 a week, even if you have it on day and night. They cost around £50 to buy. But it'll mean you can turn your heating down which will save you money, and the throw will pay for itself within a month.
- Fluffy blankets or sleeping bags will also help you stay warm. While they don't work as well as a heated throw, you may own one already and they can be cheaper to buy.
- Other things that can keep you warm are heated pads, heated floor mats, electric blankets and microwaveable wheat bags. These all cost less than 2p per hour to use.

Heated throws are cheap, portable and safe to use. You can even unplug them and put them in the washing machine.

6. Make hot food and drinks

Hot food and drinks raise your internal temperature and make you feel warmer, so have plenty of tea, coffee or other hot drinks during the day.

To save energy, only fill the kettle with as much water you need, and use a microwave where possible as this is the cheapest option for heating food and drinks.

7. Find warm spaces

- Many councils are making designated ‘Warm Hubs’, heated public places you can spend time in for free and keep warm. Even if there aren’t any in your area, many churches, community centres, libraries and museums offer free entry and activities.
- Some community venues also offer cheap or free hot meals.

8. Prevent damp and mould

Damp causes houses to feel colder and is bad for your health. We produce a lot of moisture when we cook, shower and dry clothes. All this moisture has to go somewhere, and if it's trapped in your home, it'll cause damp and mould.

You can help your home stay dry and mould-free by:

- Keeping the doors closed and the windows open in rooms where you're showering, cooking or drying laundry, and use extractor fans if you have them.
- Keeping furniture away from walls to allow air to circulate.
- Cleaning mould off walls to stop mould spores spreading.
- Where possible, dry your clothes outside. If you can't do this, use the fastest spin speed on your washing machine to get as much moisture out as possible before hanging them up.

For more information, see our factsheet on condensation, damp and mould.



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We're a charity (298740) supporting people and organisations across the UK to tackle the climate emergency and end the suffering caused by cold homes.

Our Home Energy Team offers free advice on domestic energy use to people in central southern and southwest England.

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