



# *Age Matters*

The quarterly newsletter  
from Age Cymru

*Winter Warmth edition 2022*

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

[facebook.com/agecymru](https://www.facebook.com/agecymru) [twitter.com/agecymru](https://twitter.com/agecymru)

 **ageCymru**

Creating an age friendly Wales

## Practical and cost-effective ways to keep warm, well and safe this winter

Winter can be a tough time for all of us but especially this year with the cost-of-living crisis. So, in this special winter edition of Age Matters we've brought together lots of advice on a wide range of subjects to help keep you warm, safe and well this winter.

We want to show you that no matter how challenging life can sometimes seem that there's advice, help and support out there. So, please if you're struggling this winter don't suffer in silence but reach out to us and we'll do all we can to help.

For general information about the articles in this winter edition of Age Matters or advice on issues such as benefits and entitlements you can talk to one of Age Cymru's expert advisers, in Welsh or English, on 0300 303 44 98 between 9am and 4pm, Monday to Friday (calls are charged at the same rate as a call to a standard 01 or 02 number). They will also be automatically included in any landline or mobile inclusive minutes package. Or you can email [advice@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:advice@agecymru.org.uk) or visit [www.agecymru.org.uk/spreadthewarmth](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/spreadthewarmth)



## Keep on moving

One of the best no cost ways to keep warm is to keep moving. You can generate heat through movement and, at the same time, boost the happy hormone serotonin, reduce inflammation, and help ease symptoms of depression.

If the weather outside is pleasant, try getting out into the fresh air for a walk that not only brings so many health benefits, but it can also help to break up the day.

However, if the weather is not suitable to going outside fill your day with chores such as vacuuming, polishing, cleaning or preparing a meal whilst playing your favourite film or music in the background.

Not only will household chores help to keep you warm they will also help to build your muscle strength. If you are physically able and in good health, you could try more vigorous exercises.

Being physically active also helps to boost our immune system too, so it's a win win situation for our winter health.

There are many great opportunities to meet people and make new friendships through our community based 'physical activity programmes'. We offer group exercise classes such as Nordic Walking and Tai Chi facilitated by our fully qualified and insured volunteers. For more information contact Age Cymru.

# Keeping your home warm

Try to heat your home to a steady and comfortable temperature throughout the day in rooms you use most, such as the living room and bedroom.

If there are rooms you don't use, like a spare bedroom, turn off the radiators here and close the doors. This will save on energy costs.

There are lots of practical ways in which we can heat our home effectively. First, make sure your heating system is working safely and efficiently. It needs to be checked annually by a Gas Safe registered engineer and serviced according to the manufacturer's instructions.

And why not use the free heat provided by the sun? So, when it's sunny open your curtains wide and let the sunlight flood in to warm your home. But don't forget to close the curtains when the sun goes down so you can keep all that warm air trapped within your home. And tuck your curtains behind radiators so that the heat isn't just heating your windows!

Move furniture such as sofa's away from radiators to allow the heat to penetrate the room. Use the thermostats on individual radiators to control which rooms you keep the warmest. Turn them down on rooms that you don't use and don't forget to close doors on

warmed rooms.

Remember hot air rises, so naturally the air will be colder around your feet. Keep your feet up on a foot stool, sofa or chair. Be mindful if you're using blankets or throws to take them from around your feet before you put your feet on the ground and move from where you are. You don't want to trip or fall.



## Flu and you

Getting your flu vaccination and COVID-19 booster is the key thing that you can do to help protect yourself and others this winter. If you are over the age of 50 and have not had your free flu vaccination, please contact your GP or local pharmacy to book an appointment.

While good hand hygiene, regular hand washing, and coughing or sneezing into the fold of your arm are the basics we

should all follow this winter.

Protecting yourself against flu is more important than ever as we've not been exposed to the virus in the same way with two winters of lockdowns behind us, so we haven't got our antibodies in check.

Remember flu and Covid-19 are both respiratory diseases and can lead to lengthy hospital stays and even be fatal.

# Fire Safety

Tumble dryers are very expensive to run, but don't be tempted to dry clothes on an electric heater as you could cause a fire by blocking a vent.

Equally, don't be tempted to put wet clothes directly onto a radiator, as it prevents the heat from warming the room and can cause condensation and mould. The excess moisture in a room could also lead to health problems.

A safer and more efficient way to dry clothes is on an airer with the heating or fire on or even better a dehumidifier in the same room. A dehumidifier will also give out warm air, is more economical and safer to use. Be careful when buying second hand electrical items. It's important not to block air vents and even in winter we should open our windows for fresh, healthy air.

Instead of using candles try battery powered LED touch and sensor activated lights which last longer and don't pose the risk of flames.

Make sure you have a working smoke alarm and a carbon monoxide detector. Get into the habit of testing them weekly. They are only useful if they work. If in any doubt, contact your local fire service.

And if you're using an open fire or stove get your chimney swept by a qualified chimney sweep on a regular basis.

Even in these difficult times we should still strive to keep our rooms well-lit so we don't trip over hazards as the the cost of falling in your home could be far greater than the pounds saved on electricity. A fall could result in a lengthy hospital stay and permanent injury or pain. You may think you know your home but don't let it become a prison.

We recognise this winter has pressures far greater than usual. But we urge that you put your health and safety above all costs this winter. And if you worried, please give us a call.



## Dressing for cold weather

It is important to dress correctly, even when we're indoors. Think onion with layer upon layer of clothing as several thin layers is better than one thick layer.

First, it's easier to adjust your clothing by removing a layer if you get too warm or adding a layer if you get too cold.

Secondly, more layers mean more trapped air to insulate your body from the cold, just like the trapped air between triple glazed windows. You should aim for at least three layers of clothing when dressing.

Natural materials such as wool, cotton, or flannel give more warmth than man made materials and are more breathable so you're less likely to get uncomfortable and sweaty.

When it's cold our bodies work hard to keep our internal organs warm with a stable core body temperature of 37 degrees. As a result, our hands and feet start to feel cold as our bodies prioritise the core to keep our organs working well and safely.

Wearing thicker socks or several pairs of socks, woollen insoles, or wool lined slippers with secure backs and sides will help to keep your feet warm and comfortable. Wearing fingerless gloves, or arm and wrist warmers can also help to keep you warm and comfortable.

However, when you venture out make sure you wear full gloves, a hat and scarf or snood around your nose and mouth. This helps filter and warm the air you breath making it more comfortable particularly if you're asthmatic or struggle with chest problems.

# Eating the right foods to keep healthy during winter

Food, especially carbohydrates, is fuel for the body which we need to keep our core body temperature at a comfortable 37 degrees, especially in colder weather. That's why we often crave hearty foods such as pastas, stews, casseroles, and soups all of which can be made in bulk using relatively inexpensive cuts of meat and vegetables.

Try to get your vitamin B12 by eating foods such as chicken, eggs, fish and pork. For iron try eating chickpeas and lots of green vegetables.

Ideally, we should all aim to eat at least one hot meal a day while drinking plenty of warm drinks during the winter. As well as coffee and tea you could also try warming drinks such hot water with ginger, lemon, honey, peppermint – even squash. And if you have a head cold, peppermint tea may help ease clogged sinuses and make it easier for you to breathe as would sucking a peppermint or inhaling eucalyptus.

You could also boil the kettle once and make up a flask of soup to see you through the day. You could also buddy up with a friend

or neighbour to buy your food in bulk, as this often works out cheaper, and take it in turns to cook. Not only would you be saving money on groceries and energy, but it could also offer some much-needed companionship during winter.



## Where to find help and support

There are many initiatives popping up that can offer support if you are finding it difficult to buy healthy foods and heat your home. Both are equally important in keeping you warm, safe, and well.

Big supermarkets such as Asda are operating 'Winter Warmer' initiatives across Wales whereby the over 60s can have hot soups and drinks for £1.

There are also 'warm banks or hubs' located throughout Wales where you can go and stay warm for a few hours instead of using your own heating. Such places will also provide advice and information to help support you during winter as well as opportunities for companionship.

Contact Age Cymru to find your nearest warm bank or hub.

## Sign up to Priority Services Registers for extra help from your energy and water companies

Being on a priority register can provide notice of planned power cuts or water supply issues, special support in an emergency such as a delivery of bottled water, help with meter readings, and nominee schemes whereby your utility provider will send your bills to a family member or carer of your choice. In some cases, there may also be information on how to reduce your bills.

Most older people will be eligible to sign up to priority services register including those in receipt of State Pension, and those who are disabled or have a long-term medical condition.

Even if you're not eligible to sign up to



the priority services register it is still worth keeping in touch with your providers to make sure you have all the latest information available to help you through this coming winter.

Contact numbers for the main distribution utilities are as follows: Western Power Distribution 0800 096 30 80, SP Energy Networks 0330 101 0167, Wales and West Utilities 0800 072 62 02, and Welsh Water 0800 052 0145. Contact numbers for all other utilities will be on their billing details.

If you'd like support getting onto the priority services register Age Cymru's HOPE independent advocacy project could help you. Email [advocacy@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@agecymru.org.uk) or phone 029 2043 1555.

## Help a lonely older person this Christmas

Christmas is meant to be a time of joy and light. But imagine having no one to exchange gifts with or share a hug. Not a single soul to wish you a Merry Christmas. Sadly, that's the reality for many older people in Wales today.

We're working hard to relieve the isolation and despair felt by so many. People like Gwen and John who both contacted Age Cymru this year looking for support.

Gwen knows the pain of feeling alone and isolated but also what it's like to find a light in the darkness through the gift of friendship after signing up to our Friend in Need service for a weekly call from one of our volunteers. This year, we've made more than 9,100 friendship calls to older people.

John called Age Cymru Advice and now for the first time in many years he feels that his financial worries have been taken away. We've seen a substantial increase in the number of calls to Age Cymru Advice. Last year we dealt with more than 34,000 enquiries and helped older people in Wales claim more than £7.5 million in benefits and entitlements.

This Christmas, will you donate to Age Cymru and help us to be there for older people? With your support we can listen, provide expert advice, and match lonely older people with a befriender to call them every week.

For more information on how you can support by donating this year please visit [agecymru.org.uk/brighter](https://agecymru.org.uk/brighter) or call 029 2043 1555.

## Unearth your creativity this winter

Unearthing Creativity is a collaborative project being delivered by artists Marion Cheung, Naz Syed, Creative Lives, and Age Cymru, and is supported by the Arts Council of Wales, as part of the Connect & Flourish programme.

The project has a series of worksheets, videos and prompts for anyone who would like to have a go at a new artistic activity, or maybe rekindle a dormant creative interest. The project covers more than a dozen creative activities from poetry to drawing and from creative walking to paper landscapes – and lots in between.

The activities are also appropriate for existing creative groups who may want ideas and inspiration for their meetings.

For more information, please contact Kelly Barr on 029 2043 1555 or email [kelly.barr@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:kelly.barr@agecymru.org.uk)



## Make sure you claim all your benefits this winter



Approximately £175m pounds worth of benefits and entitlements go unclaimed each year in Wales, money that could provide crucial support in the current cost of living crisis. It seems some people are simply reluctant to claim, some are put off by the claims process and others simply don't know that they qualify for extra support.

There are a number of benefits and entitlements available to some older people including the Winter Fuel Payment, Cold Weather Payment, Warm Home Discount Scheme, and the Welsh Government's Warm Homes Nest Scheme.

So, it's well worth speaking to one of our advisers to see whether you're claiming all that you're due. Last year, the Age Cymru partnership helped older people claim approximately £7.5 million in benefits and entitlements.



## Supporting older people in your community this Christmas

With the cost-of-living crisis biting hard, many older people may decide not to celebrate Christmas and the New Year as much as they would normally, so it's more important than ever that we all reach out and offer as much support as possible during the festive season.

Make time for older relatives, friends and neighbours by dropping a Christmas card through their door or calling in for a chat over a cuppa and a mince pie. For many older people their lunch clubs, day centres and other forms of activities will shut down during the festive period leaving them without any contact with the outside world.

When it becomes too cold, wet or windy, it can be impossible for some older people to get out and about so offering to run a few errands or doing an online shop could be a big help to someone. You could also offer to clear paths and driveways of any leaves, snow or ice.

While leaving a calling card with your contact details inviting the older person to call you should they need any help or support will offer some much-needed reassurance.

### Mirthy offering more than 100 online activities to help get us through the winter

Age Cymru's partnership with Mirthy continues to provide online talks, virtual tours, cooking demonstrations, creative workshops, dance and fitness classes to name but a few, and all completely free of charge. Activities that are perfect to help get us through the long dark winter months.

There are more than 100 online events each month so there's bound to be something to suit your personal interests. Events can be accessed from your computer, smartphone or tablet, all you need is Zoom and an internet connection.

To sign up visit <https://www.mirthy.co.uk/accounts/registration/CPFREE>, create your free account and pick any events which interest you.

### Get in touch

If you have a story for Age Matters then please get in touch with the editor Michael Phillips on 07794 366 224 or email [michael.phillips@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:michael.phillips@agecymru.org.uk)

### Age Matters

**Editor in Chief:** Victoria Lloyd,  
Chief Executive  
**Editor:** Michael Phillips,  
Communications Manager