

WINTER WELL

WARM HOME AND WINTER WELLBEING GUIDE 2021/2022

ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

There's more to feeling 'under the weather' than most people realise. During the winter, we see certain viruses more commonly circulating, such as flu, norovirus, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19 does spread more easily during the winter. So, we need to take the following steps.

Severe cold snaps like those we have suffered in recent winters can have dramatic effects on everyday life, especially for those people who are already vulnerable because of their age, illness or disability

Top tips to keep well during winter

1. Get vaccinated. Make sure you have received a flu vaccine if you are eligible and make sure you are fully vaccinated for COVID-19
2. Wash your hands regularly and cover coughs and sneezes
3. Wear a face covering in crowded places or when social distancing is difficult
4. Let fresh air in if you meet indoors. Meeting outdoors is safer
5. Test twice a week for COVID-19 and self-isolate if required
6. Consider limiting close contact with other people
7. Consider taking vitamin D over the autumn and winter months unless you have a medical reason to avoid it
8. Try and stay at home if you are feeling unwell. Get advice from your pharmacy, NHS 111, or your GP. Don't delay in seeking help
9. It is common for mental health to dip in the winter. There is help and support available (See useful numbers list at the end)
10. Eat warm and healthy food, drink plenty, and keep active
11. Dress for the weather and keep your home warm
12. Check in on vulnerable neighbours and relatives

Eat warm and healthy food

Eating regular meals will help keep your energy levels up. Have plenty of hot food and drinks, plan your meals and keep your diet as varied as possible. Stock up on tinned and frozen foods so that you don't have to go out too much when it's cold or icy.

To help fight viruses and keep well, it is important to have a balanced diet, which includes eating plenty of fruit and vegetables, enough protein such as beans, lentils and eggs, carbohydrates such as pasta and rice, and healthy fats such as vegetable oils, nuts and fish. Eat foods to boost the "good" bacteria such as live yoghurt or sauerkraut.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is important for keeping bones, teeth, and muscles healthy. We recommend that everyone considers taking vitamin D supplements during the winter months as it is normally derived from sunlight.

If you can take vitamin D supplements, 10 micrograms a day will be enough for most people. There are safe upper limits for different age groups. Please visit the NHS Choices website for more information. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/>

Some people have medical conditions that mean they may not be able to safely take as much. If in doubt, check with your GP or pharmacist whether you are unable to take vitamin D supplement for any reason.

Vitamin D is also found in some foods. Good sources of Vitamin D include:

- oily fish – such as salmon, sardines, herring and mackerel
- red meat
- liver
- egg yolks
- fortified foods – such as some fat spreads and breakfast cereals (check the label)

Living a healthy lifestyle

You probably know that keeping yourself as fit and healthy as you can is important all year round, but your lifestyle can make even more of a difference when it comes to keeping well in the colder months.

Keeping active benefits your physical health and it helps you to feel better mentally. It helps to maintain your strength and reduces the risk of falls. Keeping active can help with pain management and can help to keep you warm. If possible, try to move around at least once an hour. If you want to improve your activity levels, speak to the Healthy Living team, or visit the council's website <https://goactive.sthelens.gov.uk/>

For details of local services, contact Healthy Living on **01744 371111**, visit www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk or email CHCP. sthelens@nhs.net

Dress for the weather

Wear lots of layers - clothes made from cotton, wool or fleecy fibres are particularly good and help to maintain body heat.

Keep your home warm

Follow these tips to keep you and your family warm and well at home:

- if you're not very mobile, are 65 or over, or have a health condition, such as heart or lung disease, heat your home to at least 18°C
- keep your bedroom at 18°C all night if you can – and keep the bedroom window closed
- if you're under 65, healthy and active, you can safely have your home cooler than 18°C, as long as you're comfortable
- use a hot water bottle or electric blanket to keep warm in bed – but do not use both at the same time

- have at least 1 hot meal a day – eating regularly helps keep you warm
- have hot drinks regularly
- to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), babies should sleep in rooms heated to between 16°C and 20°C
- draw curtains at dusk and keep doors closed to block out draughts
- get your heating system checked regularly by a qualified professional
- To heat your home as efficiently as possible and keep your energy bills down, make sure your home has an efficient heating system, is fully insulated, and reduce draughts by fitting draught proofing (but remember some ventilation is important)

Helping to stop viruses spreading

In St Helens, over 3300 people have been admitted to hospital with COVID-19, and nearly 600 people have sadly died. Vaccination is making a big difference in helping to prevent people becoming seriously unwell with COVID-19. The virus is still circulating, so a key priority for keeping well involves stopping the spread of COVID-19. In addition to the top tips on page 1, it is particularly important to wash your hands:

- after coughing, sneezing, and blowing your nose
- before you eat or handle food
- after coming into contact with surfaces touched by many others, such as handles, handrails and light switches
- after coming into contact with shared areas such as kitchens and bathrooms
- when you return home

Wear a face covering

Clean your hands before you put your face covering on, as well as before and after you take it off, and after you touch it at any time.

Make sure it covers your nose, mouth, and chin. When you take off a face covering, store it in a clean plastic bag, and every day either wash it if it's a fabric mask, or dispose of a medical mask in a rubbish bin. Don't use masks with valves.



Flu

This year, the flu vaccine is particularly important because:

- more people are likely to get flu this winter as fewer people will have built up natural immunity to it during the COVID-19 pandemic
- if you get flu and COVID-19 at the same time, research shows you're more likely to be seriously ill
- getting vaccinated against flu and COVID-19 will provide protection for you and those around you for both these serious illnesses

To find out who is included check [nhs.uk/flu-vaccine](https://www.nhs.uk/flu-vaccine). Book your flu vaccination through your GP or pharmacy, at a hospital appointment or your midwifery service if you are pregnant.

Norovirus

The symptoms of norovirus are very distinctive - people often report a sudden onset of nausea followed by vomiting and diarrhoea. Good hand hygiene is important to stop the spread of the virus. People are advised to:

Wash their hands using soap and water and dry them after:

- Using the toilet
- Before preparing food
- Eating

Do not rely on alcohol gels as these do not kill norovirus. Washing your hands with soap and water frequently is the best way to stop it spreading.

How much do I need to drink?

Keeping properly hydrated is important for good health. It is recommended that you drink 1.5 to 2 litres a day which is equivalent to about 8 hot drinks or glasses of fluid a day. Drink regularly; water, tea, coffee, and sugar-free drinks all count.

Symptoms of dehydration

Two early signs of dehydration are thirst and dark-coloured urine.

Other symptoms may include:

- dizziness or light-headedness
- headache
- tiredness
- dry mouth, lips and eyes
- passing small amounts of urine infrequently (less than three or four times a day)

You should be able to reverse dehydration at this stage by drinking more fluids.

Am I hydrated?

Urine Colour Chart



This urine colour chart is a simple tool you can use to assess whether you are drinking enough fluids throughout day to stay hydrated. If your urine matches the colours numbered 1, 2 or 3 you are hydrated. If your urine matches the colours numbered 4 through 8 you are dehydrated and need to drink more.

Be aware! If you are taking vitamin supplement(s), some of the vitamins can change the colour of your urine for a few hours, making it bright yellow or discoloured.

Heating your home and keeping it warm.

It's important to heat your home to a safe temperature. If you're not very mobile, are 65 or over, or have a health condition, such as heart or lung disease, heat your home to at least 18°C.

To help reduce the cost of heating your home, getting it fully insulated and draught proofed will help keep the heat in.

These top energy-saving tips may seem obvious, but they can make a big difference when it comes to reducing your fuel bills.

- Is your water too hot? Your cylinder thermostat should be set at 60°C (140°F)
- Don't leave appliances on standby
- Only boil as much water as you need (but remember to cover the element if you're using an electric kettle)
- If you replace all the bulbs in your home with LED lights, you could reduce your carbon dioxide emissions by up to 40kg a year and save money too!
- Turn your lights off when you're not using them

Support is available to help with the cost of heating and insulation, some of the measures available include:

- First time central heating
- Boiler replacements
- Low Carbon Heating – Heat pumps and Solar Thermal
- Wall and loft Insulation

Please note that funding is subject to meeting qualifying criteria. For further information please contact the Council's Affordable Warmth Team on **01744 676555** or the Save Energy Advice Line on **0800 043 0151**.

The Save Energy Advice Line is provided by local charity Energy Projects Plus.

Make sure you aren't paying too much for your energy

It's likely your energy tariff is price-capped if you haven't switched or your fixed-deal has ended. The energy price cap is a backstop, keeping charges fair if you don't shop around. It applies if you're on a default energy tariff, whether you pay by direct debit, standard credit or a prepayment meter.

It won't apply if you:

- are on a fixed-term energy tariff
- have chosen a standard variable green energy tariff Ofgem has exempted from the cap

You can contact your supplier to check if you are on their default tariff. If you're not, you may already be paying a better rate for your energy. But it's still worth checking if you could save more by switching to another tariff or supplier.

Call the Save Energy Advice Line on **0800 043 0151** for advice and assistance in finding a cheaper supplier or visit **www.lcrenergyswitch.co.uk** to register for the Liverpool City Region collective energy switching scheme.

Help with energy bills

Support is available to help with paying for your fuel bills. Check if you're entitled to the following payments:

Winter Fuel Payment

This year you could get up to £200 for households with someone who qualifies aged up to 79, or up to £300 for someone aged 80 or over.

You could be eligible if you have reached the qualifying age and you normally live in the UK. For winter 2021/22, people born on or before 26 September 1955 will have reached the qualifying age.

To find out more about Winter Fuel Payments, call **0800 731 0160** between 8.00am - 6.00pm, Monday to Friday. You can also textphone 0800 731 0464 or visit **www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment**

Cold Weather Payment

Cold Weather Payments are made during periods of very cold weather to help people pay for extra heating costs. To get a Cold Weather Payment, the average temperature where you live must be recorded as, or forecast to be, 0°C or below for seven days in a row. You may be able to get Cold Weather Payments if you are in receipt of a qualifying benefit.

To find out more about Cold Weather Payments, visit www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment

Warm Home Discount Scheme

The Warm Home Discount Scheme provides £140 rebate on your electricity bills in winter 2021/22.

You qualify for the discount if on, 4th July 2021, all of the following apply:

- your supplier was part of the scheme
- your name (or your partner's) was on the bill
- you were getting the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit (even if you get Savings Credit as well)

You'll receive a letter between October and December 2021 telling you how to get the discount if you qualify.

Your letter will say if you need to call a helpline by 28 February 2022 to confirm your details.

Your electricity supplier will apply the discount to your bill by 31 March 2022. If you don't get a letter but believe you qualify, contact the Warm Home Discount helpline on **0800 731 0214**.

Energy suppliers included in the scheme may also give a £140 rebate to other customers in vulnerable groups. Each electricity supplier has different eligibility criteria they will use to decide who may get the rebate.

For further information about the scheme, call the Warm Home Discount Team on **0800 731 0214**. Lines are open from 8.30am - 4.30pm, Monday to Friday, or call the Save Energy Advice Line on **0800 043 0151** for further details.

Alternatively visit <https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme/energysuppliers> for a full list of suppliers taking part.

Other sources of financial support

If you're struggling to pay your energy bills, help could be available.

Remember to contact your energy supplier in the first instance, as they may be able to offer you a cheaper tariff or payment plan to help you stay on top of your bills.

For pre-payment customers support may be available with emergency top up vouchers, contact the following organisations for advice:

St Helens Borough Council - **01744 676666**

Save Energy Advice Line - **0800 043 0151**

St Helens Borough Council's Affordable Warmth Team - **01744 676555**

Fuel debt

If you are in debt with your gas or electricity supplier, Citizens Advice St Helens may be able to help. Call them on **01744 751380**.

Income maximisation

Make sure you are claiming all the benefits to which you are entitled.

For a free and confidential Benefit Entitlement Check, call **01744 676555**.

Useful & emergency contact numbers

Health:

St Helens Contact Cares - **01744 676767**
(8.00am to 10.00pm - seven days per week)

A one-stop entry to all health and social care support - supports people in a variety of ways including care beds, tenancy support, and emergency food supply.

Merseycare 24 Hour Mental Health Crisis Line - **0800 051 1508**
Free phone for Mental Health crisis support (available 24/7)

Samaritans - **116 123**

A free-to-call service if you want to talk to someone in confidence. You can also email: jo@samaritans.org and contact Samaritans on behalf of someone you are worried about, and Samaritans can reach out to them (available 24/7).

St Helens Mental Health Assessment Team - **01744 621 688**

For adults with moderate to severe symptoms of mental illness, whose needs would best be met by specialist mental health services (available 24/7).

St Helens Wellbeing Service - **01744 371111**

NHS 111: non-emergency medical help - **111**

Energy:

Energy efficiency advice call:

Save Energy Advice Line - **0800 043 0151**

St Helens Borough Council Home Improvement Agency - **01744 676555**

If you smell gas or are worried about gas safety (24 hour helpline).

National Gas Emergency Number - **0800 111 999**

In the event of a power cut, please contact your local network operator:

SP Energy Networks - **0800 001 5400**
(or **0330 1010 400** from a mobile phone)

Electricity North West Ltd - **0800 195 4141**

If you have no water, a leak, a burst pipe or low pressure call:

United Utilities - **0345 6723 723**

Emergency:

Police, Fire and Ambulance emergencies - **999**

Other useful numbers:

St Helens Council Contact Centre - **01744 676789**

Merseyside Police: non-emergency number - **101**



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