

Keeping warm this winter

A guide to keeping warm and staying well this winter
for those using oil fired central heating



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efficient safe energy


OFTEC
Ireland

in association with

AgeAction
For all older people

Keeping warm this winter

With many of us worrying about rising fuel costs and cold winters, OFTEC, the organisation that supports and upholds standards in the oil heating and cooking industry, has teamed up with Age Action Ireland to bring you all the information and advice you'll need to keep warm this winter – and get the most for your money on oil.

As we get older, our bodies respond differently to low temperatures and this can leave you more vulnerable in cold weather. However, with a little preparation and by following some simple suggestions, you can stay healthy, safe and as comfortable as possible this winter.

Many people living in rural areas off the mains gas supply rely on oil to heat their homes. The good news is that oil is still an efficient fuel that will give you reliable and controllable heat, whenever you want, with minimum fuss or bother.

Over the past five years oil has competed favourably on price, with average price increases less than half that of gas and electricity. You can also choose when and where you buy your oil and instalment payment options are usually available to help spread the cost.

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For more help and advice call any of the following free telephone numbers:

Age Action Ireland 01 475 6989

OFTEC 01 864 5771

(Lines open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday)



The importance of staying warm

Low temperatures increase the risk of flu and other respiratory problems and can raise blood pressure. Blood pressure takes longer to return to normal in older people after being out in the cold and this puts you at greater risk of heart attacks and strokes. The colder your home, the higher the risk to your health.



The recommended temperature for your main living room is around **70°F/21°C** and the rest of the house should be heated to at least **64°F/18°C** but it's vitally important if you feel cold to turn the heat up regardless of what the thermometer reads.

You should get to know how the timer and thermostat on your heating system work. If it's very cold, set the timer to switch the heating on earlier, rather than turning the thermostat up to warm your house quickly. If you have individual thermostats on your radiators, make sure they're set at the right temperature in the rooms where you spend the most of your time.

Be prepared for winter – Top 10 tips

Getting ready for the cold weather – which can start as early as October – means that you're more likely to keep warm and well. Here are some things you can do to stay safe and ward off the winter chills.

- Check your heating system – see following pages.
- Keep simple cold, flu and sore throat remedies in the house.
- Follow up your GP's invitation to have a flu jab.
- Order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time, particularly if bad weather is forecast.
- Ask your local pharmacy if they offer a prescription pick-up and delivery service.
- Dress in plenty of layers and make sure that you have some warm shoes or boots with non-slip soles.
- Eat healthily and keep as active as possible.
- Keep basic food items in the cupboard or freezer in case it's too cold to go shopping.
- Keep a mixture of salt and sand handy to put on steps or paths in icy weather.
- Consider fitting a grab rail if you have steps at your front or back door.

Ask your family, neighbours or friends if they could call or visit you more often if a period of cold weather stops you getting out and about.



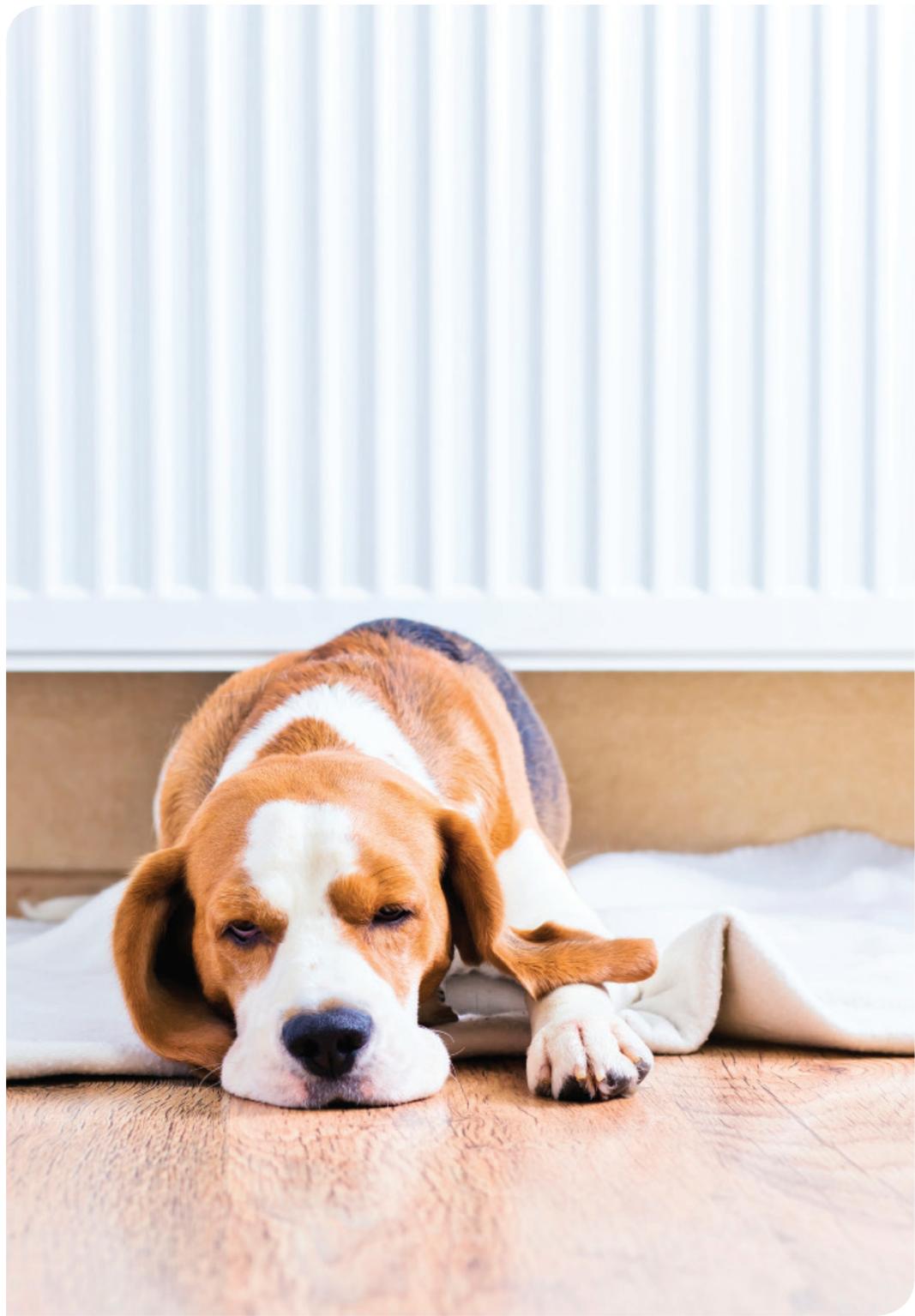
Keeping your home warm

Most of us spend a lot of time indoors in winter so it's important that you are comfortable and that you keep your home warm.

10 THINGS YOU SHOULD THINK ABOUT BEFORE WINTER SETS IN:

- Have your boiler and oil tank serviced by an OFTEC registered technician to help avoid any unforeseen breakdowns at the worst possible time (see below).
- Make sure the level of oil in your tank is checked regularly (ask a friend or neighbour to do so if it isn't safe for you to check yourself).
- Order enough fuel to get you through the winter in good time so that you don't risk running out and going cold.
- Remember to bleed your radiators, or ask someone to bleed them for you, to make sure you are getting the maximum heat for your money.
- Consider improving your system controls to make sure that you aren't spending money heating rooms that you don't use.
- If your boiler is more than ten years old, it might be worth replacing it with a more modern, high efficiency boiler, which could save you money in the long run.
- If you use a real fire, ensure your chimney is swept every 12 months.
- It is also important to consider how well your home is insulated. Do everything you can to stop heat escaping from your property to save you money year after year.
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm near your boiler to alert you if your appliance malfunctions, producing this poisonous gas.
- Make sure you claim all the financial support you can (see over).

It's important to choose the right technician and avoid 'cowboys' – untrained or incompetent workmen. To find your nearest OFTEC registered technician, call our friendly advice team on **01 864 5771**.



How to save money on oil

A good way to save money is to buy your oil through a community oil buying group in your area. If several homes bulk order fuel this can save you a lot of money and also save you time and energy in comparing prices yourself.

Ask in your local shop or check your village magazine for details, or ask a friend or neighbour if they can look into this for you – it could help them save money as well!

Another tip is to think about buying your oil in the summer when prices are lower. If you don't use a buying group then shop around for the best price by calling at least three different providers if you can.

Payment Methods

There are a number of payment methods available to oil consumers. You can pay by cash, cheque, debit card, credit card, Direct Debit (DD), and standing order. Speak to your supplier about the best payment option that suits you and your distributor for your usage and budget.

Prices quoted over the phone and on company websites must be accurate and reflect the price paid at the time of order. An over the phone quote (supported by full delivery details), unless otherwise stated is considered a verbal contract and is therefore legally binding.



Getting the best value

The price of oil has dropped in recent years and is currently the cheapest fuel for home heat in Ireland*. Heating oil prices are quoted per volume required in litres and include 13.5% VAT. The price of oil goes up and down throughout the year as it is directly linked to the price of refined wholesale oil products. It is also affected by market forces including exchange rate movements.

You have the option to shop around and compare prices before you order as there are a number of oil suppliers. Remember, there are other factors to consider as well as price including; delivery time, customer service, payment terms etc. Always make sure you are comparing similar services.

Ensure you ask what payment methods are available and if there are any additional charges i.e. credit card charges.

* Sutherland Tables October 2015

Oil tank security

Remember that the oil in your tank is valuable. If you live in a remote area you should consider taking appropriate security measures to prevent it from being stolen such as installing a security light near your tank, fitting a padlock or lockable cap, buying a remote electronic gauge which will set off an alarm if the oil level suddenly drops or applying warning stickers to your tank which say that it is alarmed.



Further advice can be obtained from your local registered technician.

Help with your heating bills

It's important to make sure you're not missing out on any benefits or discounts you're entitled to that will help you keep your home warm. You can contact Age Action Ireland for a benefits check and advice on any other financial support you may be eligible for.

1. Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme

This scheme installs energy saving measures in your home, at no cost to you, including:

- Draught-proofing
- Attic insulation
- Lagging jackets for hot water tanks
- Low energy light bulbs
- Cavity wall insulation

Energy advice is also provided as part of this service

You may be eligible for this scheme if:

- You own your own home
- Your home was built before 2002
- If you get the Fuel Allowance (part of the National Fuel Scheme)

For more information call the Better Energy Warmer Homes helpdesk on Lo-Call 1800 250 204.



2. Better Energy Homes

This scheme is available for people who do not qualify for the Warmer Homes Better Energy Scheme. It provides grants to homeowners to upgrade their homes with energy efficiency measures, thus reducing energy use, costs and greenhouse gas emissions. This may include:

- Roof insulation
- Wall insulation
- Boiler and heating control upgrades
- Solar panels

You may be eligible for this if your home was built before 2006.

Terms and Conditions

Grant approval must be in place before works commence

Grant works must be completed to SEAI standards by a SEAI registered contractor

Grant works, including a publisher BER, must be completed and paperwork submitted to SEAI within six months of the grant offer.

For more information, go to www.seai.ie/Grants/Better_energy_homes/



3. The Housing Aid for Older Persons Scheme

This scheme makes essential repairs and improvements to the condition of the older person's home. It is provided by Local Authorities all over Ireland. Generally it is available to people aged 60 years of age and above, however if there is a case of genuine hardship the local authority may give assistance to people under 60 years of age.

The type of work which may be grant aided under the scheme includes:

- structural repairs or improvements
- re-wiring, repair or replacement of windows and doors
- the provision of water, sanitary services and heating
- cleaning and painting
- radon remediation
- any other repair or improvement work considered necessary

Some county councils will approve of upgrading of heating systems.

The grant can be paid to people in:

- Owner occupied housing
- Houses being purchased from a local authority under the tenant purchase scheme.

For more information, contact the Housing Section of your Local Authority about how to apply and about the eligibility rules in your area.

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Further information about saving money on oil can be found at
www.oilsave.org



The *energy* behind liquid fuels



in association with

