



Age Matters

The quarterly newsletter
from Age Cymru

Winter Warmth Edition 2020

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 **ageCymru**
Creating an age friendly Wales

Keeping safe, warm and connected this winter

By Victoria Lloyd, Chief Executive, December 2020

Welcome to our special Winter Warmth edition of Age Matters which is packed full of information to help keep you safe, warm and connected this winter. We're especially delighted to welcome our new readers – we hope you enjoy our Age Matters newsletter.

It's great to be ending the year with the positive news that vaccines to immunise against Covid-19 had been developed and will be rolled out in the coming months, with initial priority given to frontline health and social care workers as well as those aged 80 and over.

It's also a good time to reflect on the overwhelming support that people the length and breadth of Wales have given in their local communities during what has been a difficult year. Thank you to everyone who has perhaps looked out for a friend, neighbour or loved one, helped with shopping and prescriptions or provided a friendly ear at the end of the phone. It's also a good time to thank the many volunteers who have helped Age Cymru be there for older people.

Here's hoping that 2021 will be a brighter year for all of us, as we work together to help bring about the changes that will deliver an age friendly Wales.



Keeping warm when outdoors

Keep your hands and face warm by wearing gloves and a scarf wrapped around your face. The scarf will warm the air you breathe and protect your lungs from the cold air. Several thin layers of clothing will keep you warmer than one thick layer, as the layers trap warm air.

Keeping warm indoors

If you spend lots of time sitting still try wiggling your fingers and toes. It's also a good idea to keep your feet up if you can, as the air is cooler at ground level. And who can resist the warmth provided by a hot water bottle!

Keeping your home warm and safe

Keep your home at a warm and stable temperature and preheat your bedroom so that it's warm for when you settle for bed. The ideal temperature for your living room is 21°C/70°F and 18°C/65°F for the rest of your home. Close doors to keep the heat from moving to the rooms you don't use.

If your home has gas central heating, this needs to have an annual safety check, as do all the gas appliances in your property, by a Gas Safe registered engineer. This will make sure that not only is your heating system safe but it is working as efficiently as possible.



You should ask your energy supplier about improving the insulation in your home. It is also important to make sure all your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide monitors are working properly.



Get the flu jab

This year it's more important than ever for older people to help protect themselves against the flu.

The flu jab is available to anyone aged 50 and over in Wales. It is also available to carers and those who live with someone who is shielding. So, if you haven't had the flu jab yet contact your GP, or your local pharmacy, to arrange a free vaccination.

Flu is very infectious. To reduce the risk of spreading it wash your hands often, use

tissues whenever you cough or sneeze, and bin used tissues as quickly as possible. Flu is in season throughout winter and you can catch it even when the weather is mild.

Check you've had a 'pneumo' jab

When you have your influenza jab, check to see if you've had the 'pneumo' (pneumococcal) jab too. The 'pneumo' jab is a one-off jab that helps protect you against pneumonia, meningitis and septicaemia. Ask your GP about it if you're 65 and over and haven't had one.



Covid-19 Vaccine

As we go to print we were all excited to hear that the Welsh Government has started rolling out a vaccine for Covid-19. The initial roll out will target frontline health and social care workers as well those at highest risk of catching the virus, including those aged 80 and over.

If you are in one of these categories do not contact your GP or local pharmacist. Instead wait for an invitation from your local health board on where and when to come for the COVID-19 vaccination.



Eat well to stay healthy

Spending more time indoors and doing less of the things we enjoy means it can be difficult to keep up the motivation to prepare meals. Try to keep a bit of a routine and eat what you can.

Aim for at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day, so that you're getting plenty of nutrients and vitamins to nourish you and build your immunity. And don't forget that frozen, dried and tinned fruit or vegetables are just as good as fresh foods, as long as they're not canned in syrup.

Hot meals and drinks can help to keep you warm so try to eat at least one hot meal each day such as a bowl of soup or stew. While warm drinks during the day and before you

go to bed will help you feel warm from the inside out.

Staying active

Try not to sit still for more than one hour at a time. You might not think it, but even a little bit of activity can help you to keep strength and mobility and boost your immune function. Everyday chores such as cleaning, washing up, ironing, and vacuuming all count as physical activity, so you needn't worry about joining a gym!

Being active can also warm you up, lift your mood and boost your energy levels. So while you may not feel like it at the time, try to do little and often throughout the day.



Check your finances

There are a number of financial help services that can help with your energy bills this winter.

Most people born on or before 5 October 1954 are entitled to the Winter Fuel Payment which is a tax-free payment of between £100 and £300 to help with heating costs.

If you receive Pension Credit, or certain other benefits, you're automatically paid a

Cold Weather Payment when the temperature is at 0°C (32°F) or below for seven days in a row.

You may also be entitled to a Warm Home Discount on your electricity bill if you receive the Guarantee Credit part of Pension Credit or if you're on a low income. Contact Age Cymru Advice for more information.

Survey launched for older people looking after loved ones

Age Cymru and Carers Trust Wales have launched a survey, funded by Welsh Government, to help provide a better understanding of the needs of people aged 50 or over who provide unpaid support to family or friends, but aren't accessing any services, information or advice.

Wales has the highest proportion of older carers in the UK, with more than 210,000 aged 50 or over, and large numbers of

these are so called 'hidden carers' who don't access services or support for their role, or even identify as a carer. And without effective support many of these 'hidden carers' can become exhausted and ill themselves.

The survey is open to anyone aged 50 or over in Wales who looks after family members or friends because of long-term physical or mental ill-health, disability, or older age, and who don't have any contact with carer support services.

To take part in the survey visit www.agecymru.org.uk/carerssurvey or call 029 2043 1555 for a paper copy of the survey and a prepaid return envelope.

Supporting our older neighbours this winter

Being neighbourly to older people not only helps to keep them safe but it also provides a warm reassurance that there is someone there to help them should they need support during these challenging times.

First, we can leave a contact number with an older neighbour so they know help and support is only a telephone call away. We can also offer to pick up shopping or prescriptions if it gets too dark and cold for your neighbour to venture out. You could also ask your local authority for a free bag of salt to scatter on their footpaths if the weather turns icy.

But we can also offer friendship during these long dark winter nights by having a friendly chat on the telephone, or posting a 'thinking of you' card through their letter box.



Volunteer with us?

If you're keen to help us create an age friendly Wales, why not check out the many volunteer opportunities at Age Cymru, from informal volunteering through our Friend In Need service to more formal opportunities like making friendship calls, becoming a peer advocate or leading a Nordic Walk. Our opportunities are available across Wales, check our website for more details: www.agecymru.org.uk/volunteer

Age Cymru Advice

For information on all the issues covered in this special Winter Warmth edition of Age Matters, contact Age Cymru Advice. You can call, in English or Welsh, on 0300 303 44 98 between 9am and 4pm, Monday to Friday. Calls charged at local rates. Or you can email advice@agecymru.org.uk. There are also lots of resources on our website: www.agecymru.org.uk/advice

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

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