

Keep Your Home Safe and Warm

A guide for winter



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Introduction

Keep yourself and your home safe this winter.

The clocks have gone back, winter clothes are in fashion, and the heating is going on. It's official – the colder months are upon us!

In this guide, you will find information on how to keep yourself and your home safe this winter - to stay warm and keep your bills low.

We recognise that the cost-of-living crisis is affecting us all, in particular when it comes to energy usage. That's why it's essential to make sure you're prepared for the colder months.

We've created this resource and many others alongside our repairs team and contractors, as well as community organisations across our London areas.



Heating and Energy

Mythbusting

Myth: It's cheaper to leave the heating on low all day, instead of only when I need it.

Fact: If you have good insulation in your home, then even when the heating is off, heat will be kept in. If you keep the heating on all day, you're losing energy. Only heat the rooms you're using!

Myth: If I turn up the thermostat, the room will heat up more quickly.

Fact: You don't need to turn your thermostat up when it is colder outside; the house will heat up to the set temperature, however, it may take a little longer on colder days.

Myth: It's cheaper to boil water in a microwave than use a kettle.

Fact: If you only use the amount of water you need, a kettle is cheaper than a microwave.

Myth: Phone and laptop chargers don't use energy when plugged in but not being used.

Fact: Appliances drain energy when switched on at the plug. It's good practice to switch off at the wall. It also helps extend the life of batteries.

Myth: A smart meter will save me money.

Fact: No, at least not on their own. But they can help you to identify ways to save energy by showing what energy you're using and what it costs.

Top tips to save energy

Heat the human, not the home

Wearing warm and layered clothes is an effective way of keeping in heat. Investing in an electric blanket can keep you warm day and night and costs around 1p an hour to run.

Close doors to keep heat in

By having doors open, heat is lost more quickly and will also warm up an unused space, which adds needless money to energy bills. You should only heat the room you are in and close the doors.

Every two to three weeks, radiators should be turned on in unused spaces for a short spell of time to prevent any internal problems around the home, such as damp and mould.

Swap your bath for a shower, and have a shorter one!

Swapping just one bath a week for a shower can save you up to £14 per year. Reducing your shower time to 4 minutes can save up to £65 per year.

Understand your boiler

Understanding how your boiler works and how to set it correctly could help you to reduce your heating bill – read this handy guide energysavingtrust.org.uk/take-control-your-heating-home



Further support with your energy bills

- Energy Advice for London offers free advice on saving energy, reducing bills and accessing financial support. Contact them for free on 0808 196 8260.
- SHINE London offers advice and grants for heating and insulation. They can also arrange an 'Energy Doctor' to visit your home and assess how you can save on your bills. Call the SHINE team on 020 7527 2001 or email shine@islington.gov.uk
- On 16 October 2023, the Government launched a Warm Home Discount Scheme. Visit www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme for more information.
- Contact your energy provider directly. Many providers are offering grants and discounts to their customers as part of the Energy Company Obligation.
- For helpful guides and trusted tips, visit the Energy Saving Trust website. energysavingtrust.org.uk



Plumbing

Mythbusting

Myth: Chemical drain unblockers are effective.

Fact: Chemical unblockers damage your pipes, and the hazardous chemicals put you at risk too. A plunger works better for less.

Myth: 'Flushable' wipes are flushable.

Fact: The majority of 'Flushable' wipes are not flushable. In fact, wipes are the cause of 90% of sewer blockages. Make sure you put wipes in the bin to avoid a hefty unblocking bill in the future.

Myth: Pouring oil down the sink is OK, as long as it's with boiling water.

Fact: Boiling water will only harden the grease, making it even more difficult to remove. Clean fat out with kitchen towel once it cools and put it in the bin.

Myth: A leaky tap isn't a cause for concern.

Fact: Taps which run at a constant dribble can use over 450 litres of water costing you an additional £300 a year.



Top tips on plumbing

Know where your water shut off valve is

Knowing where your mains water shut off valve is located could save you money. In the event of a burst pipe or a major leak, turning off the valve will stop the water supply to your house, and lessen the damages. It is normally located in the cupboard under the sink. If you can't find it, ask your neighbours, as similar properties normally have it in the same place.

Clean your shower drain

A build-up of hair can cause a serious blockage in your drain, and you'll end up paying for something you could have avoided. Make a habit of de-clogging the shower and bath drains from hair.

Use a toilet hippo

Toilet hippos are cheap devices you can add to your cistern to save you water every time you flush. You can find toilet hippos for purchase online but remember to check it's suitable for your cistern before you buy.

Spot a leaking toilet

A leaking toilet can add to your water bill. An easy way to check for leaks is to put a drop or two of food colouring in the tank. If the water in your toilet bowl has changed colour in the next half an hour - you have a leak.

Wash and dry your clothes more efficiently

Using a time saving cycle, and lowering the temperature to 30 degrees, can save you a lot on water and energy bills. If you can, line dry or air dry your clothes, though to prevent damp and mould you may want to invest in a dehumidifier.

Keep drains clear from clogs

Invest in strainers to cover drains, catch hair and other debris to throw in the waste instead of the drain. You can get these at many hardware shops at very little cost.

Further support with plumbing

- Our repairs team handle any plumbing repairs you require. Please contact them on 0300 131 7300 or email isha@isha.co.uk
- Visit websites such as Get Water Fit or Save Water Save Money to see if you are eligible for a free Water Saving Box.
- www.getwaterfit.co.uk
- www.savewatersavemoney.co.uk



Don't wait! Report repairs right away!



Damp and Mould

At ISHA, we take all reports of damp and mould very seriously.

If you spot any sign of damp and mould, please report it to us immediately, even if the problem is only small. Contact our Customer Service Team on 0300 131 7300, email isha@isha.co.uk or visit our office between 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.

There are lots of reasons why damp and mould can occur in your home. To make sure every case is properly investigated, we will visit and assess your home.

Tips for preventing damp and mould

Watch our quick 10 tips video to find out more about easy ways you can reduce the risk of damp and mould at home.

Some techniques you'll find more effective than others, especially as we enter winter and leaving windows open to ventilate rooms becomes less suitable.

But it's still a good idea to familiarise yourself with these methods.



What are damp, mould and condensation?

Read our quick guide on spotting the difference, and how to treat it.

Remember!

If you spot any sign of damp and mould, please report it to ISHA immediately.



Support in your neighbourhood

If you're struggling with the cost of bills, ISHA can help direct you to support in your area, and our staff can help you with applications. Get in touch with us to find out how!

You'll often find help available from your council on issues like fuel and food bills, so it's worth having a look at what they offer.

If you receive certain benefits, you should be automatically receiving some financial support. Your council should have contacted you about this, but if you think you've missed out on the support you're entitled to, we can help you investigate.

Visit your council website and search for cost of living support, winter funding programmes or contact them directly.



Information on Food Banks

Foodbanks operate on a referral basis, so you'll need to get a referral before you can use them.

Each food bank works with different frontline professionals, like doctors, health visitors, social workers, and Citizens Advice.



These professionals will be able to refer you to a food bank and give you a food bank voucher if they think you need emergency food.

You can locate the food bank nearest to you on the Trussel Trust website or call ISHA and we can help identify one for you.

Foodbanks often receive donations of other items like essential toiletries or cleaning supplies, which may be helpful even if you don't need groceries.

There are also a number of foodbanks that charge a weekly fee in exchange for a package of goods worth much more.

Can ISHA refer me for food vouchers?

Yes, we can. If you think you need food vouchers, please contact ISHA's Outreach team by emailing Outreachandsupport@isha.co.uk or call 0300 131 7300.

Warm Banks

Why use warm banks?

Warm banks are not only places where you can stay warm, without worrying about the cost but quite often can be social meeting places for your community. Most Warm Banks offer a variety of activities to participate in such as board games, chair-based exercise classes and cooking classes.



Did you know?

- Staying in a home heated to less than 18 degrees can be damaging to your health; especially for the elderly or very young.
- If you are over 65, have a long-term health condition or are pregnant, you are eligible for a free flu jab to protect against seasonal flu. Please speak to your GP.
- If you are unable to heat all the rooms you use, it's a good idea to heat the living room during the day and your bedroom just before you go to bed.



Want to know more about people's experiences of warm banks?

Watch this video.



Scan Me

Get in touch

If you have any other questions, or indeed anything else that we can help with, please get in touch with our team.

Call us

0300 131 7300

Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm

Email us

isha@isha.co.uk

We share updates about support available to you from ISHA, local authorities and other businesses on our website and all our social media pages.

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**Islington & Shoreditch
Housing Association**