

Age Scotland charity urges everyone to look out for older neighbours as temperatures drop

Age Scotland, the charity for older people is urging everyone to take extra care and look out for their older friends, relatives and neighbours during the cold snap.

Icy weather conditions can be especially dangerous for older people who are at increased risks of falls and poor health. With new lockdown measures in force, there is also the risk that more older people will feel isolated at home and cut off from their family and friends.



Photo Age Scotland

The charity is urging people to find safe ways to stay in touch and look out for vulnerable members of their community.

It is also sharing top tips for staying warm and well during the winter months.

Michelle Supple, Age Scotland's Director of Charity Services, said: "This winter is an especially harsh one for hundreds of thousands of older people in Scotland. While we understand why new restrictions are necessary, they are a bitter blow for those who are already struggling with loneliness and isolation.

"The icy weather conditions gripping much of Scotland are only making this worse. Going out for a stroll can be dangerous for those at risk of falls, while meeting family and friends outside in sub-zero temperatures is far from ideal. As we get older, it can take us longer to warm up, while cold temperatures can exacerbate respiratory problems, heart disease and other health conditions.

"However, there is plenty that we all can do to help ourselves and those around us. It's more important than ever to check on your older relatives and neighbours. A friendly phone call or an offer to help with shopping could be a lifeline for someone who feels isolated at home. If you haven't seen a neighbour for a few days, why not pop a note through their door to check they're OK?

"We can also all take time to care for our own mental and physical health over the winter. After a long, difficult year the prospect of more cold, dark months can easily get us down. But simple steps such as staying active safely at home, eating well, and keeping in touch with loved ones can make a real difference."

Age Scotland's top tips for staying warm and well include:

Keep moving – Sitting still for too long can be bad for you. If you can, try to move at least once an hour. Our Around The House In 80 Days challenge is a series of short, fun videos to help you stay strong and flexible at home.

Eat well – it's definitely not the season for salad fresh from the fridge, but eating a healthy diet will help boost your energy and mental health. Check out our Eat Well guide for information and ideas about food, and who can help if you have problems with eating a balanced diet. Make sure you are getting enough vitamin D; the sunshine vitamin is in short supply in winter.

Stay connected – Lockdown restrictions have left many of us feeling cut off from family and friends – and loneliness can seriously affect our mental and physical health. Our Friendship Line is available weekdays from 9am to 5pm on 0800 12 44 222 for a friendly chat or information about local services.

Keep up with medical appointments – While coronavirus has affected some NHS services, don't neglect health problems or long-term conditions. Make sure you stay as well as you can be by attending routine appointments or having vaccinations.

Remember to wash your hands regularly; we've been told this a hundred times, but it is excellent advice!

Stay cosy – it is tempting to turn down your heating to keep your bills down, but being too cold puts you at risk of colds, flu and hypothermia. Living areas should be heated to 21 to 23 degrees Celsius, and wearing layers can help you stay warm. Home Energy Scotland has more information on saving money on energy bills and help that is available.

Stay stocked up – there is always peace of mind from having a well-stocked cupboard but it's more important than ever when any of us may need to self-isolate for a while. Our Eat Well guide has suggestions for basics for every kitchen.

Keep an eye on your money – winter food, winter clothes, and even drying your washing can cost more in winter. It's also the time of year when your house can spring nasty surprises such as leaks, damp and draughts. Care and Repair Scotland,

Home Energy Scotland, and the Age Scotland helpline (0800 12 44 222) can help you access advice and support.