

Your Guide to a Healthy Home

Make *your* Home Safer and Improve your Health and Wellbeing



A guide for homeowners and tenants

Warm, Safe Housing

Warm, safe housing is a fundamental need for a healthy life.



Your housing can affect your health

Poor housing conditions, overcrowded homes, and unaffordable properties can all have a negative impact on your health and wellbeing.

As you get older the condition of your home becomes increasingly important to your health.

Research suggests some common health problems may be caused or made worse by the condition of your home:

- Heart disease (heart attacks and strokes)
- Respiratory infections (flu, pneumonia, bronchitis)
- Arthritis

Making **improvements, modifications or repairs** to your home can lead to improved health and wellbeing.

What if I am a tenant and my landlord will not help?

Your Council can use legal powers to enforce improvements to a rental property. If an informal approach does not encourage a landlord to carry out necessary works to make your property safe, enforcement powers can be used, including fixed penalties for some offences and prosecution if we consider it to be in the public interest. Please contact your local Council for further information and assistance - see back page for contact details.

Cold Homes

The indoor temperature of your home can have a negative impact on your physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.

Private tenants must receive a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate when they begin a new tenancy, unless the property is a House in Multiple Occupation. This will give you important information about the efficiency of your home and likely energy bills.

Landlords will soon have to stop renting homes with the lowest energy ratings of F and G.

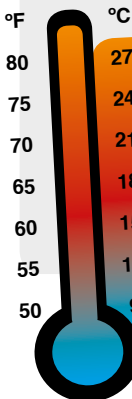
Living in a cold home can substantially increase your risk of:

- Respiratory conditions (COPD, asthma)
- Cardiovascular conditions (Heart problems and stroke)
- Arthritis and rheumatism
- Hypothermia
- Mental health problems

What are the ideal temperatures for a home?

Your heating system should be capable of maintaining the following internal temperatures when the external temperature is -1°C :

Living room and dining room:	21°C
Bathroom:	22°C
Elsewhere:	18°C



- 27 **Too hot** for babies, who may overheat - reduce the temperature, but ensure you stay warm and comfortable
- 24 **Discomfort**
- 21 **Ideal** living room temperature
- 18 **Comfortable** temperature for rest of house, like hallways and kitchens
- 15 **Discomfort** and a risk of respiratory illnesses like asthma and bronchitis
- 12 **Too cold** and increased risk of heart attack and strokes in vulnerable people
- 9 **Risk of hypothermia** at this temperature and below

Case Study

Mrs B lived in a poorly insulated house with only a portable electric heater to keep warm. She only used it when she couldn't bear the cold any longer as she was worried about her heating bills. The cold was aggravating her arthritis. She now has full central heating as a result of a loan from the council and has had free loft insulation installed. Her quality of life has improved considerably and she now feels well enough to go out to bingo again!

Elderly occupants are most at risk from excess cold due to the prolonged period of time people over the age of 85 spend in their homes.

Causes

- Inadequately insulated homes
- Inadequate or inefficient heating systems
- Damp problems
- Occupants who can not afford to adequately heat their homes are at greater risk of excess cold and ill health

What can you do?

- Improve the insulation in your home
- Improve or replace inefficient heating systems
- Repair any damp problems
- Ensure you are on the most competitive tariff for your heating bills
- Consider installing renewable measures to heat your home

Warm and Well

Contact Warm and Well who provide free, impartial and local energy advice. The team will be able to advise you on any grants that may be available for insulation or energy efficient measures.



Link to Energy

Contact Link to Energy who host a handy, easy-to-use online database which helps to put people in touch with suitable energy efficiency and renewable energy installers in their area.



To find out more about Warm and Well and Link to Energy, call the advice line on 0800 5003076.

Damp and Mould



Damp and mould is more likely to occur in a cold, poorly insulated home. Properties with damp increase the risk of occupants under the age of 14 developing asthma.

A damp and mouldy property can effect:

- Respiratory conditions such as asthma and bronchitis
- Arthritis and rheumatism
- Your mental health; for example, increased risk of depression and anxiety

Condensation

Condensation occurs when warm moist air meets a cold surface which can cause black or green mould growth. This can be caused by an excess of water vapour, cold walls (usually those that are not insulated) and inadequately heating your home.

Condensation

What can you do?

- Avoid drying wet clothing inside your home especially on radiators or poorly ventilated areas. Dry clothes in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open
- Improve insulation in your loft and walls to prevent cold spots
- Shut the bathroom door when having a shower or bath and ensure the mechanical ventilation is on or a window is open
- Avoid using calor gas or paraffin as both produce large quantities of water vapour
- Increase ventilation when cooking by opening windows or using mechanical extraction and cover pans
- Maintain a slightly higher more constant background temperature to avoid cooling down the main fabric of the building.

Do you know where your stopcock is?

Turn it a couple of times a year to prevent it from seizing up. If you find it difficult to reach consider installing a wall mounted switch.

Penetrating damp



Penetrating damp

Isolated patches of damp on walls and ceilings can indicate penetrating damp. Mould can grow on these areas. This can be caused by a leak into your home through a defect in the walls, roof and chimney.

What can you do?

- Identify the cause of the water penetration and carry out repairs
- Maintain and clean guttering regularly

Rising damp

A tide mark on the inside wall up to 1 metre high may be an indication of rising damp. This is usually caused by a lack of an effective

Rising damp



barrier between the water in the ground and the walls of your property (damp proof course, DPC).

What can you do?

- Make sure the base of your property's outside walls are clear from debris and remove any soil that could be covering the DPC
- You may need to have the DPC repaired or improved. This will need to be carried out by a qualified contractor

Plumbing Defects

Leaks from water or waste pipes can cause significant damp problems.

What can you do?

- If the leak is rapid turn off your water supply at the stopcock, locate the defect and repair the leak.

Falls on Stairs

Falls on stairs account for 25% of all falls in the home. The health of an elderly person can deteriorate following a fall and can result in death within months of the initial fall injury.

What can you do?

- Install a second hand rail to your stairs
- Install brighter lights in stairwells and over steps
- Install grab rails next to baths, showers, toilets and steps
- Repair loose or uneven stairs and steps
- Secure carpets
- Check for things you could trip over and remove them; for example, electric cables
- Use a touch-sensitive light by the bed to avoid over-stretching for light switches
- Keep warm – being cold increases the risk of a fall
- Keep active
- Ensure you have regular eyesight checks



Case Study

Mr and Mrs K lived in a private rented property and had always felt uneasy about the layout of their garden. It was over two levels and there was a considerable drop between both tiers of the garden without any guarding in place. They contacted the housing renewal team for advice. Mr and Mrs K said they felt it was too dangerous to let their four year old daughter Mary play in the garden for fear of her falling from the top level onto the patio paving below, but had no extra income to spend on making the garden

safe. An environmental health officer visited the property and assessed this to be a category one hazard. The council has a duty to act when a category one hazard has been identified. The officer served notice on the landlord, requiring him to install appropriate guarding to the drop to remove the risk of someone falling. The family can now enjoy their garden without worry. Mary's friends go over to play in the garden, helping her engage with other children and benefit from fresh air and physical exercise.

Defective Appliances



Defective Gas

Defective gas appliances can cause:

- Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning
- Injury as a result of a gas explosion or fire
- Worsening of respiratory problems

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning

CO is an odourless, colourless gas.

Symptoms include:

- Drowsiness/dizziness
- Headaches and nausea
- Confusion
- Tiredness
- Chest pains / breathing problems
- Exposure to low levels can cause brain damage or death

Check

Check your appliances for black soot or stain marks on gas appliances or yellow / orange lazy flame on gas fire. The flame should be a crisp blue. If you find your property has excessive condensation this could be an indication that there is a problem with your gas appliances.

What can I do?

- Install a carbon monoxide detector - these are required by law in rented homes with solid fuel appliances, and are recommended for all rooms with a gas appliance
- Have your gas appliances checked regularly by a qualified gas-safe installer. Check the gas-safe register at: www.gassaferegister.co.uk
- Ensure chimneys, flues and solid fuel appliances are swept regularly and kept clean
- Tenants must be given a copy of the annual gas safety check certificate

Defective Electrics

Defective electrics can cause:

- Falls due to trailing wires and extension cables
- Injury caused by electric shocks
- An increased risk of a fire

What can I do?

- Install a smoke alarm - rented homes are required by law to have a smoke detector fitted on each floor
- Do not rely on extension leads and adaptors; install additional sockets. Always use a registered electrician
- Get an electrical safety check - houses in multiple occupation require an electrical inspection every 5 years. This is considered good practice for all homes
- Ask the fire service for a FREE safe and well home check

HOW WE CAN HELP

We have a number of schemes that can help you improve your property



Cheltenham Borough Council
01242 262626
enquiries@cheltenham.gov.uk



Cotswold District Council
01285 62 3000
CDC@cotswold.gov.uk



Forest of Dean District Council
01594 810000
council@fdean.gov.uk



Gloucester City Council
01452 396 396
heretohelp@Gloucester.gov.uk



Stroud District Council
01453 754478
environmental.health@stroud.gov.uk



Tewkesbury Borough Council
01684 272191
ehenquiries@Tewkesbury.gov.uk

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Warm & Well

For free, impartial and local energy advice, call the Warm & Well advice line free on 0800 500 30 76.

Occupational Therapist

If you, or a member of your family, are having difficulties with day to day living within your home due to a physical disability, sensory impairment or old age, you can request an occupational therapy assessment to make it easier for you to live independently.

Contact the Adult Helpdesk on 01452 426868 or Children's Helpdesk on 01452 426565 to find out what help is available.

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, on request, offer a **FREE** safe and well home check to ensure that your household is as safe as possible from the dangers of fire and also install smoke alarms. They also advise on general well being for the over 65s.

If you feel you need a safe and well home check, call 0800 180 41 40 to arrange your visit. The visit and any smoke alarms required are offered **FREE OF CHARGE**.

HANDYMAN SERVICES

Handylink Services

Handylink service offers a range of minor home repairs and gardening services. There is a minimum charge of one hour at £18.50 + VAT per hour. Tel: 0800 408 2000 or 01452 424344.

Clean Sweep Plus

Clean Sweep Plus offers clients practical support at home.
Telephone 01452 420 931