



Connecting You to Community Services

Eldercare Locator/EPA's Home Energy Tips for Older Adults

Older adults and their family caregivers can take the following actions to stay warm economically and safely this winter:

- Find out about financial energy assistance programs: Many states, counties and cities provide programs that assist older adults with winter heating costs. Your local Area Agency on Aging is a good source of information about available community programs and eligibility requirements. Ask about the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), the Weatherization Assistance Program, and other energy assistance. To identify your Area Agency on Aging, contact the Eldercare Locator at 800-677-1116 or www.eldercare.gov.
- Be aware of help available through utility companies: Check with your gas, water and electricity suppliers to see if they offer a monthly budget plan to help spread out those high energy costs this winter over an entire year. Often they maintain special heating assistance funds, as well as "no cut off" guidelines to avoid termination of service for elderly, disabled and ill customers who have difficulty paying their bill. Utility companies also are a great source for energy conservation information. They might be able to refer you to an expert to inspect your home for ways to make it more energy efficient, or provide a list of contractors to tune up your furnace so that it is working at peak efficiency.
- Look for ways to cut down on winter energy use: The ENERGY STAR Program, run by the EPA and the Department of Energy, offers steps to follow to make your home more energy efficient (888-782-7937 or www.energystar.gov). Other easy steps to take include using storm windows or inexpensive stretch window film to keep out drafts, using a programmable thermostat to lower temperature automatically when you are away from home or asleep, changing furnace filters at least every three months to keep the warm air flowing, and weather stripping or insulating the attic hatch or door to prevent warm air from leaking out of the house. Also, although a log fire in your fireplace is nice, it does not heat your home because heated air drafts up the chimney. When not using your fireplace, close the damper.
- Ensure your health and safety: In addition to addressing the need to stay warm during winter, consider safety as well. For example, make sure that: smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are installed and working properly; water pipes are insulated to avoid freezing and bursting; electrical cords on space heaters are not damaged and do not pose a tripping hazard; batteries and battery-powered flashlights are available; and a fire extinguisher is ready to use.
- Have a back-up plan: Before you need them, consider alternative arrangements should extreme weather conditions require emergency action. These might include: having another place to stay temporarily, asking someone to check on you daily – especially if you live alone, making sure that your medicine and medical needs are met, and sharing contact information with everyone who would need it.

Eldercare Locator
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