



Keep Well This Winter

Sept/Oct 2009



www.kwtw.org.uk

Keep Well this Winter for Older People in Wales

The Keep Well this Winter Campaign starts now and will run until March to help keep older people in Wales well, warm and safe. There will be awareness events in your locality to provide help and advice on a range of themes including flu and flu vaccination, maximising income, healthy eating and safety in the home. All of the information relating to the campaign is also available on our website www.kwtw.org.uk. You can also obtain further information and resources by contacting Age Concern Cymru and Help the Aged in Wales on 029 2043 1555.

Most older people think that these campaigns and awareness days are for people in worse situations than themselves, though very often find they need this essential information during the winter. Staying independent means 'everything' to older people who strive to carry on their lives as they always have done, managing their own affairs.

One major area of work this year will be providing information about the differences between winter flu and swine flu and to encourage as many older people and their carers as possible to book their winter flu vaccination to protect themselves. As yet we are unsure what impact swine flu will have over the next few months, but, with the potential for health services being stretched to their limits over the winter period, prevention will definitely be preferable to cure.

Another important aspect of the campaign is maximising older people's income by ensuring they are claiming all of the benefits/entitlements available to them, particularly within the current economic climate. This is important as it can reduce worries about paying bills, ensure that good food can be purchased and provide the means to take part in social activities, all of which have a positive effect on health and wellbeing.

Due to the recession, funding and resources for this year's campaign will be severely restricted so effective cross-organisational working will be more important than ever to maximise the support available to older people during the winter months. Working together we can make a difference and I am always happy to answer queries or questions and lend any support needed.

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Keep Well this Winter Briefing

The Briefing Event for Keep Well this Winter took place in August and all the presentations from this event are now on the new version of the KWTW website under 'Promoting KWTW'.

The implications of the swine flu will affect this year's campaign in several ways.

It is uncertain that Welsh Assembly funding will be made available to National Public Health Service Coordinators. The general advice is to assume there will not be funding.

We are currently awaiting deliveries of the new seasonal flu leaflet. This leaflet is currently being translated into Welsh and when we receive the leaflets they will be sent out to the NPHS coordinators along with the following resources:

- KWTW thermometers
- Fire safety leaflets
- KWTW Booklet

You will receive the same amount of resources as ordered last year except for the packs. The packs are last year's resources and therefore limited stock.

In addition to the above resources we have been given a stock of the Home Heat Helpline, 'Little Book of Energy'. This is officially being launched on the 8th October. The aim is to offer help and support on energy.

There will also be an additional resource made available at the N.E.A. training sessions - Age Concern Cymru and Help the

Aged in Wales' leaflet 'A guide to home energy costs' which provides information about the cost of running appliances in the home.

On the Age Concern Cymru and Help the Aged in Wales website, www.accymru.org.uk, you will also find the booklet 'A brief guide to benefits and financial entitlements for older people in Wales' and 'Factsheet 1w: Help with Heating in Wales'. Both of these documents can be downloaded to support the work of the KWTW campaign.

Both these documents have been reported as helpful and informative so through the KWTW coordinators budget we will print a substantial number to support the campaign. If you require a small stock of the documents and are not registered to attend the N.E.A. training sessions please email rosalyn.williams@accymru.org.uk or call 029 2043 1552.

The strength of this year's campaign will be seen through the versatility of our coordinators to use the local partnerships that have been developed and get the KWTW messages to older vulnerable people through local networks.

Comment on the Website

The KWTW website has been updated for 2009-10 and is now being administered by Age Concern Cymru and Help the Aged in Wales. Please look at the website to get support for running the KWTW campaign. The section on 'promoting KWTW' will be where we try to put new information and

examples of best practice. Let us know if you find anything dated in the website, remembering that much of the information remains constant from last year. The Welsh translation will be available shortly.

Developing the Campaign

KWTW includes many projects and topics related to wellbeing, warmth and safety. There are many programmes running in line with these aims i.e. Falls Prevention/ Integrated Falls services, Food Co-ops etc. The current aim is to get winter specific awareness and information to older people though health is essential all the year round. Within the KWTW campaign there will be topics and projects covered that link with and follow on to holistic wellbeing of older people in your areas.

Please let us know what is happening in your area so that we can share good practice.

Risk of falls - know the danger signs

Every year, more than 700,000 older people in the UK attend accident and emergency after a fall and falls are a leading cause of death for the over-75s.

There are many risk factors that can increase the chance of a fall, including medical, environmental, social and mobility factors.

For older people who have already fallen, the risk of another fall is increased so it is important to know what caused the fall and be aware of other risk factors and take action to reduce them. A doctor or other health professional can provide a full assessment of potential problems.

It is important for older people to try not to restrict their activity because of a fall or fear of falling again as they will become less strong and steady and more likely to fall again.

Know the risk factors

The normal balance mechanisms of the body can be affected by age, disease such as Arthritis or Parkinson's disease and by medication so it is important that an older person keeps as mobile and active as possible to maintain their strength, balance and flexibility to reduce the risk of a fall.

For older people taking more than four medications there is an increased risk of a fall. They should contact their doctor or pharmacist if they think their medication is making them unsteady or dizzy.

Another risk factor for falls is poor sight so it is important for

older people to have regular eye check-ups and those with cataracts or glaucoma should take extra care. Bifocals and vari-focals can also distort vision so it is a good idea to consider having two pairs of glasses instead (financial help may be available - ask your optician).

A poor diet can also increase the risk of a fall as, without sufficient vitamins and minerals, energy levels, muscle strength and bone health can be affected. A healthy and varied diet can do much to prevent problems and should include ample calcium and vitamin D to reduce the risk of bone fracture.

Alcohol is another risk factor for falls as it dulls the senses, affects sleep quality and impairs judgement and balance. Alcohol should therefore be used in moderation and should not be mixed with medications.

Poor lighting in areas such as stairways and kitchens can increase the risk of falling so 100-watt light bulbs should be used in these areas. Your local Age Concern or Care and Repair agency can often provide assistance to change bulbs and make other modifications to make your home safer. Older people should ensure that they turn lights on at night if they are up and about. Light wall-coverings or paint can also help reflect more light.

Keeping the house warm (between 18°C and 21°C) can also reduce the risk of a fall as it prevents joints stiffening and reduces tiredness.

It is a good idea for an older person to do a self-assessment

of their home; is it clutter free and are all floor coverings in good repair? Do they need any adaptations such as grab rails to help them get around? Local agencies such as Age Concern or Care and Repair or social services can often provide help to make such adaptations.

Remember - if an older person falls, even if they have not hurt themselves, they should see their GP afterwards because all falls are potentially serious and need advice or treatment.

What should I do if I fall?

Don't Panic! You will probably feel shocked and shaken but try to stay calm.

If you are hurt or feel unable to get up then **Rest and Wait**:

- try and summon help
- move to a soft surface
- keep warm
- keep moving (as much as you can)

If you are unhurt and know you are able to get up then follow the **Up and About Plan**:

- roll onto hands and knees and crawl to a stable piece of furniture.
- use hands for support and place one foot flat on the floor bending your knee in front of your tummy.
- Lean forwards, push on your feet and hands until you bring the other foot to be beside the first.
- Turn and sit on the seat, resting for a while before getting up.

Digital Television Switchover

The start of the digital switchover in Wales is now well underway and with Wales set to be the first nation in the UK to complete the switch to digital, here's how we need to prepare.

Many older people will already be enjoying digital TV through an aerial (Freeview), via satellite, with cable in some areas or through broadband. However, it's important to make sure every TV set and recorder that they plan to use after switchover is capable of working with digital signals.

Virtually all households will be able to receive around 20 of the most popular Freeview channels, as opposed to the five currently available on analogue TV. Many households will be able to receive more than 40 channels.

Wales is served by a range of transmitters and relays which will all have completed the switch to digital in March 2010. To find out which transmitter covers your area you can use the postcode checker at www.digitaluk.co.uk, where you will also find further information and help on the switchover.

The postcode checker will help you find what options for switching to digital are available, check whether you live in an area that can currently receive digital television via an aerial, and find out which transmitter group you're most likely to be receiving your terrestrial TV signal from. Information is also available on the phone. Simply call the Digital UK helpline on 08456 50 50 50. Welsh Language help and advice is available by calling 08458 48 48 48.

Top tips for getting ready for digital switchover:

1. Check to see if you're already set for switchover

If you already have digital TV, that is more than five standard channels on all your TV sets, then you're ready for switchover. However, if you only have digital TV on your main set, you'll need to think about converting your other sets.

2. Find out what services are available in your area

Visit the Digital UK website (www.digitaluk.co.uk) and use the postcode checker to find out what digital TV services are available in your area. The checker can tell you what your options are now, during and after switchover. You can also find out when your region switches to digital.

3. Look for the digital tick

You don't necessarily need to throw out your old TV as virtually all models can be adapted with a digital box - even black and white ones. If you're thinking of buying a new television or recording equipment make sure you look for the 'digital tick' logo. This is a certification mark that appears on products and services designed to work before, during and after switchover.

4. Check if you qualify for help

The Switchover Help Scheme has been established by the BBC to offer practical assistance at the time of switchover to approximately seven million households. Letters will be sent to every household eligible for help from the Switchover Help Scheme,

which offers assistance and equipment to convert one television for those aged 75 or over, registered blind or partially sighted, or on certain disability benefits. Those in the first areas to switch will be contacted from February 2009. Everyone eligible will be offered help and sent information packs in time for switchover in their area. For more information, visit <http://www.helpscheme.co.uk>

5. Don't forget your recorder

Analogue video and DVD recorders will continue to playback tapes and discs, but need to be connected to either a digital box or digital television in order to record programmes after switchover. They will only be able to record the digital channel being watched. A 'twin tuner' digital TV recorder (DTR) or a digital DVD recorder will let you record one digital channel while watching another.

6. No one will call from Digital UK

Nobody from Digital UK will come to your house unless you've arranged an appointment yourself. If you have arranged for work to be done, always make sure you ask for identification.

7. If you need further advice, contact Digital UK

If you have any questions and need any more advice, Digital UK is on hand to help. You can visit the Digital UK website at www.digitaluk.co.uk or call the helpline on 08456 50 50 50. A Welsh language helpline is available on 08458 48 48 48.



Pensioners pay more money for less heat

New research adds to the evidence that some pensioners are turning down the heating or staying in bed to save on fuel bills. This is despite having to spend more money on energy as a result of huge increases in gas and electricity prices since 2004.

A major new report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) released recently reveals that despite having increased spending on fuel by almost one third between 2004/5 and 2006/7 to meet higher bills, poorer pensioners have, nevertheless, reduced their fuel consumption by seven per cent. Further price increases during 2008, after the period covered by this study, will have added to the pressure, forcing poorer older people to turn down the heating or cut spending in other areas.

The report, commissioned by Age Concern and Help the Aged, which looks at pensioner spending patterns across many different categories, reveals a picture of pensioner haves and have nots who experience hugely contrasting lifestyles during retirement. For example, in 2007, the poorest fifth of pensioners needed to spend nearly 40 per cent of their budget (after housing costs) on food and fuel, while the richest fifth spent just under 20 per cent.

Holidays are a major area of spending for the richest group of pensioners accounting for £1 in every £8 of their budget, making this the biggest single item in their shopping basket. In contrast, poorer pensioners spent a mere £1 in every £30 on

holidays and their largest budget items were electricity (6.5% of spending) and then meat (6.2%) out of the 56 categories that were analysed.

The report also compares pensioners spending patterns with non-pensioner groups over time. Some findings include:

- Despite high spending on holidays, in 2007 even the richest pensioners still spent less of their budget on certain luxury items compared to younger people. For example, the poorest under 35s spent more of their budget on eating out (7.8%) compared to the richest over 70s (5.7%).
- Older people continue to financially support others, for example through cash gifts and presents to younger family and friends and charity donations. This type of payment was the 10th largest item on the shopping list for those aged 80 plus, compared to 25th for households under-35.
- Younger pensioners spend as much as households aged under-35 on average and by 2007 pensioners in the richest 40 per cent of households were spending as much as non-pensioners in the same income group.

Andrew Harrop, Head of Public Policy at Age Concern and Help the Aged said: "What's most clear from this important new research is the significant differences in living standards between older people at different ends of the income scale. Shockingly, the report finds that while poorer

pensioners are spending more of their available income on energy, they are – at the same time – reducing the amount of energy they buy. Not only does this demonstrate the problem of soaring energy costs in recent times, but is a warning to policy makers and others that vulnerable older people could be putting their health at risk in winter just to cut costs.

Energy bills not likely to fall

The big six energy suppliers have told regulator Ofgem that there is little chance of any further cuts in tariffs this coming year, despite a drop in wholesale energy costs.

Ofgem estimates lower costs will boost suppliers' gross profit on dual-fuel customers by £60 this year.

The energy companies say other costs which make up 40% of bills are rising steeply.

Consumer Focus said the industry's responses were a 'chorus of excuse and self-justification'.

Further energy price increases will place an additional burden on many older people in Wales who struggle to pay their bills so it is important that they maximise their income by claiming all of the benefits they are entitled to.

There is also help available for older people in Wales to make their homes more energy efficient. For more information, contact HEES Wales on 0800 316 2815 or visit www.heeswales.co.uk

Munch through the credit crunch

The credit crunch may be tightening our purse strings, but there's no reason to suggest that a limited budget will mean an unhealthy diet. In fact, the Food Standards Agency in Wales has some useful advice on how you can enjoy a balanced and healthy diet without spending too much cash. There are also lots of healthier, tasty recipes too!

Dr Sarah Jayne Rowles, Head of Dietary Health at FSA Wales, says: 'In times like these it's really important to remind ourselves that healthier food doesn't have to cost more. There are lots of delicious meals that won't cost the earth, and if we store and re-use these correctly we can get the most value from the food we buy.'

Be smart with your shopping:

- Plan ahead – What do you fancy to eat throughout the coming week? Make a shopping list that you can stick to so that you'll be less distracted by less healthy options. Also, why not explore your area? Your local market may be cheaper than the supermarket.
- Don't shop on an empty stomach – How much more tempting are foods when you're hungry? Try to eat before you leave home, or grab a healthier snack for your journey to keep hunger at bay and reduce those unnecessary impulse buys!
- Better late than never – You may find that you can catch some late bargains if you shop towards the end of the day.



- Be shelf savvy – Compare prices of different brands. Buy one get one free offers can be great value, but be sure to dash past any offers on foods which are high in fat and sugar or for foods that aren't on your shopping list.

So, don't forget to dedicate a good chunk of trolley space to healthier foods such as fruit and veg. It doesn't all have to be fresh though – frozen, tinned, dried and juiced fruit and veg all count towards your 5-a-day. Also, foods that are in season may be cheaper.

The freezer is your friend!

Take advantage of reduced items that can be frozen. Freezing food is a great way to retain nutrients, reduce waste and stretch your money further:

- Be sure to check any freezing instructions and freeze on the same day of purchase.
- Defrost thoroughly in the fridge, try to use it within 1-2 days and be sure to cook until steaming hot. Tips on keeping food safe can be found at www.eatwell.gov.uk

Why not be resourceful and make your store cupboard ingredients into a tasty lunch or dinner – it needn't take hours in the kitchen. Dried and canned goods such as pasta, beans, tinned tomatoes and tuna often

have a long shelf-life, so don't leave them at the back of your cupboard gathering dust. Pulses such as lentils and kidney beans contain fibre are extremely versatile and can be used to bulk out all kinds of meals.

Taste not waste

Another simple way to save money is to think about what you throw away each day and what you could make with your leftovers, providing that they are stored and reheated correctly. You could use some cheap containers or freezer bags to freeze your leftovers for when you fancy a night off from cooking. Also, freezing any left over homemade stock in ice cube trays means that you only use as much as you need.

Takeaways sometimes have good offers, but are not always the healthiest option. So if you really fancy a takeaway, try to make healthier choices such as opting for boiled rice instead of fried, and dry curries rather than creamy and/or coconut ones.

It may also be cheaper to make your own healthier versions at home. Pizzas are often cheaper to make and taste great with low fat toppings such as lean chicken, plenty of vegetables and a small amount of reduced fat hard cheese

So, its official – healthier food doesn't have to cost us more. Just be savvy when shopping, creative with cooking and remember to get freezing!

For further advice on making healthier food choices, visit the Food Standards Agency's website - www.food.gov.uk.

Diary Dates for Coming Months

Over the next few months Keep Well this Winter events and activities will be taking place throughout Wales to provide older people with help and advice to keep them healthy during the winter period.

If you are running an event that you'd like us to list in the newsletter and on the Keep Well this Winter Website, please contact Ros Williams on 029 2043 1552 or email rosalyn.williams@accymru.org.uk.

Real Life Stories Request

The key aims of the Keep Well this Winter campaign include improving the health and quality of life of older people in Wales. Real-life examples of this can motivate those involved with promoting the campaign by showing what difference has been made to older people. Also, access to a human interest story can be the difference between the media giving press attention to the campaign and highlighting campaign messages, or rejecting the story.

If you know of any real-life stories of how the campaign has helped an older person and could share the story either anonymised or with the older person's consent and identity revealed, then please contact Ros Williams on 029 2043 1552.

October Newsletter

It is important that everyone is aware of KWTW activities that are coming up as well as successful events or initiatives that have already taken place. Please forward up-coming dates, articles, photos and ideas to: Ros Williams - Tel: 029 2043 1552; Fax: 029 2047 1418; email: rosalyn.williams@accymru.org.uk

The deadline for the next newsletter is Friday 16 October.
The Editor reserves the right to alter submitted articles.

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Useful websites:

Keep Well this Winter - www.kwtw.org.uk
Welsh Assembly Government - www.wales.gov.uk
Age Concern Cymru and Help the Aged in Wales - www.agecymru.org.uk