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Airing Out The Facts on Your Air Conditioner

Tips to Help Keep Costs Low and Air Quality High During the Summer Months

The temperature outside is rising, so it's time to raise your air conditioner IQ with some helpful, cost-saving tips from Larry Cavalier, Technical Service Expert for Filtrete Filters from 3M.

- 1. Change your air filter regularly.** When your air filter is too dirty, airflow in your home may be reduced. During warmer months, a dirty filter means that not as much cool air can circulate. And if your A/C system doesn't have adequate airflow, condensation can build up inside the system and start to freeze the inner coils. In the short term, this stresses the system and in the long term, it may lead to a costly repair. To keep optimal airflow, change your air filter at least every three months during the cooling season. If you run the furnace fan constantly, consider replacing the filter monthly.
- 2. Check the dehumidifier drain.** Your air conditioner acts as a dehumidifier, drawing moisture from the air to help cool it. Once pulled from the air, that moisture has to go somewhere. Your dehumidifier drain line channels excess water into a floor drain or a pan. The plastic hose can accumulate debris, so it's important to check occasionally to make sure it's draining properly. To check for clogs, gently pull the hose off the side of your furnace. Use a long-handled cleaning brush to sweep out the tube. You can also disconnect the hose completely, and flush it clean using your garden hose.
- 3. Give your condenser some TLC.** That big unit on the side of the house is your A/C condenser, the powerhouse behind the whole cooling system. The condenser fan pulls air from the outside to keep the working parts cool. Over time, dirt and debris collect on the outside cooling fins, which can cut down on the system's efficiency. To clean your condenser fan, shut down the system first, then spray the outside of the unit with a garden hose. Still dirty? Call in a pro to give the system a more detailed cleaning. Your condenser also needs room to work properly. Leave some space on all sides to encourage good airflow. Plant bushes at least a few feet away.
- 4. Maintain ducts and vents.** Dust and debris can accumulate in your ductwork, reducing airflow. Every three or four years, hire a professional to give your ducts and vents a thorough cleaning. Home improvement projects can create a lot of dust in your home, so your ductwork will likely need to be cleaned once the project is complete. If dust remains after a home improvement project, add an air purifier to the remodeled room like the Filtrete™ Air Purifier available from 3M. If you move into a new place and don't know when the ducts and vents were last cleaned, hire a pro.
- 5. Find your thermostat's sweet spot.** Set the temperature too low, and you'll face a hefty energy bill at the end of the summer. Set it too high, and you won't be comfortable. Try your thermostat at 78°F to start, and lower it if you need to.

6. Turn on ceiling fans. If you have ceiling fans, keep them on during the cooling season. They help cool the air and distribute it evenly. With the ceiling fans doing part of the work, you may be able to raise the A/C thermostat a couple of degrees — and save some money.

7. Curtain southern-facing windows. If you have windows on the south side of your home, close the curtains or blinds during the day. This prevents hot sun from beating through the window, which can raise the indoor temperature significantly.

8. Run big appliances in the evening. Your dishwasher, oven and clothes dryer generate a lot of heat. If you use them during the day, your A/C system has to work harder to cool the air. If you can, run large appliances in the evening when the outdoor temperature drops.

9. Use bath & kitchen fans sparingly. Designed to draw moisture and odors out of your home, these fans also draw out cooled air in the summer. Run them only when necessary, to avoid losing too much conditioned air and energy.

About 3M

A recognized leader in research and development, 3M produces thousands of innovative products for dozens of diverse markets. 3M's core strength is applying its more than 40 distinct technology platforms – often in combination – to a wide array of customer needs. With \$23 billion in sales, 3M employs 75,000 people worldwide and has operations in more than 65 countries. For more information, visit www.3M.com.

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