

10 Ways to Improve Your Indoor Air Quality

1. Control humidity. A humidity level above 55%RH will promote the growth of dust mites. Humidity levels that are high enough to cause condensation on your windows (as low as 35% RH in the winter) will promote the growth of mold. Conversely, humidity levels that are too low can be irritating to your sinuses. For more information see the following documents: [Moisture Problems](#); [“Fighting Mold – The Homeowners’ Guide”](#)
2. Don’t use scented air fresheners (e.g. scented candles, plug ins and aerosols). First, they don’t eliminate odours, they just mask them. Secondly, they contain numerous toxic compounds which irritate asthmatics, cause headaches and nausea or are suspected carcinogens. For more information, see the following [report](#) from the Natural Resources Defence Council.
3. Keep your basement dry to prevent mold. Install eavestroughs and extend downspouts 4-6 feet away from the house. Ensure the ground outside your house slopes away from the house so that water drains away. Run a dehumidifier in the spring and summer. If you have a drainage sump in your basement, install a cover to minimize evaporation and to contain odours (make sure it’s perforated to allow drainage).
4. Minimize the use of carpets, especially in the basement and bathroom.
5. Vacuum frequently and thoroughly.
6. If you have a dirt floor in your crawlspace or basement, cover the floor with a polyethylene sheet (at least 6 mil) and tape all the seams.
7. Minimize the presence of pets in your house. If you do have pets, clean their litter boxes and cages frequently, and keep them out of your bedroom.
8. Ventilate. Even if you live in a drafty old house, you need to at least have an exhaust fan in your bathroom to help control humidity. If you live in a more airtight house, a heat recovery ventilator or air exchanger is a better choice.
9. Vent your dryer outside. Some people vent their dryer to the inside during the winter to save energy. You don’t actually cut your heating cost significantly by doing this and you introduce a lot of excess humidity and dust to your home.
10. Test your house for Radon. If you get a result of 200 Bq/m³, contact a Radon mitigation specialist to help you reduce the levels. See Health Canada’s [guide](#) to testing for Radon.