



General Maintenance



A L A I R

LIVING BETTER STARTS HERE™



Protecting Your Investment

Protecting your investment begins with proper care. We have included a maintenance and care checklist of items that you should be frequently reviewing throughout the year. Quite often things can be forgotten about, especially if they are out of sight, like the saying goes “out of sight, out of mind.” The maintenance & care checklists we have prepared, we hope will make it easier on you to keep your home well maintained. With all items in your home it is best to reference the suppliers guidelines, please reference those documents before taking any maintenance projects on any aspect of your home.

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Floors



HARDWOOD

It is important to maintain your hardwood floors. They can be a beautiful investment that may increase the value of your home.

Homeowners often think of moisture damage is caused just by flooding incidents in their homes or large amounts of liquid being spilled on their hardwood floors. While these are possible and should be dried up immediately, moisture damage can also stem from climatic changes in the humidity levels in your home during the warmer months. Ensure that your home is kept at a reasonable level for air conditioning and humidity control throughout the year. In the colder months when the air is much dryer, heat can cause the opposite affect and cause planks of wood to pull apart at the seams. Once again, keep humidity levels consistent to keep your wood flooring from reacting drastically.

There are many ways to keep your hardwood floors shining, from wood soaps and cleaners, to waxes that you can buff on. A solution as simple as water and vinegar sprayed on a sponge mop will clean your floors effectively while also protecting the finish, without damage. For that lustrous look, many hardwood flooring experts suggest natural products like olive oil as opposed to wax-based cleaners. To protect your floors from daily activities that cause scratches, consider using cloth furniture protectors under the legs and feet of your tables, chairs, and heavy furniture. Although, many homeowners feel scratches and natural wear can add character to their hardwood flooring.

CARPETS

Protecting your carpet from daily wear and tear, dirt, stains and spills through proper care can help prolong your carpet's life. It is important to vacuum frequently and thoroughly. Most carpeting wear is caused by dirt and oily soil; frequent vacuuming will reduce the build-up. Test your carpet before scrubbing, extracting, or spotting. All carpets are different, some carpets are very sensitive to acid type cleaners and will lose their color quickly.



LAMINATE

Laminate flooring is extremely durable and easy to care for. Small stains can be removed quickly and easily with just a damp cloth. That being said, laminate needs to be cleaned regularly in order to prevent it from getting scratched and warped. Using harsh cleansers can create streaks or damage the laminate. See below for simple tips to care for your laminate flooring.

- Mats will help to protect against abrasions in high-traffic areas with lots of dirt, such as entry ways.
- Protect furniture legs with felt pads to guard against scratching. Please note, you can void your warranty should you decide not to use felt pads.
- Office chairs with wheels should use class W, soft castors.
- Take extra caution in areas with flower pots, vases, and near water faucets. Standing water should be avoided at all costs.
- When cleaning, make sure the cloth is damp and not soaking wet.

TILE

Tile is known for its water resistance and easy cleaning. With the right maintenance routine, your tile floors will look great and hold their value for your home. Tile is strong, durable, and easy to replace if sections become chipped or cracked. One of the most important aspects of cleaning your tile floor is making sure dirt and spills do not have a chance to soak in. Clean up spills and tracks of dirt as soon as possible with a mop or cloth. Hot water and a mild household detergent will do the trick as well. Please note, spot test with any detergent before use. Regular maintenance is important, such as sweeping, vacuuming, and a light mopping in your bathroom, entryway, or kitchen tile floors. A quick sweep or vacuum removes the dirt and debris before it can become embedded in the tile or grout. Mopping with warm water and using a manufacturer-recommended cleaning product also enhances your tile's gloss, shine and color.

GLAZED TILE

Clean regularly with an all-purpose, non-oil-based household cleaner that's compatible with cleaning grout joints. Use an everyday multi-purpose spray cleaner to remove soap scum, hard water deposits, and mildew on wall tiles in your bath or shower.

UNGLAZED TILE

Use concentrated tile cleaners that have a neutral pH for regular cleaning. These will safely remove grease, oils, and normal day to day spills – just check to be sure the cleaner is intended for the application, use, and traffic level.



TIPS FOR PREVENTING DAMAGE

- Test powders and sealants on small area before cleaning the full area.
- Use a sealer on grout joints shortly after installation and use products compatible with cleaning grout joints.
- After cleaning, rinse the entire area with clear water to remove any cleaning solution residue.
- Have any damaged or broken tile removed and replaced only by a qualified tile contractor.



Walls and Trim

PAINT

When properly applied, high quality paint will protect and make your home look beautiful for years, although there are many things that can ruin its appearance and durability. Like many components of your home, paint needs to be properly maintained and cared for. After selecting the cleaner of your choice, to clean your walls, it is important to test a small area to ensure it is not going to cause any damage. It is recommended to wash the walls in your home at least once every year.

WALLPAPER

Maintaining the wallpaper in your home can be as easy vacuuming. A soft brush attachment is best, especially if the wallpaper is textured. Depending on the area you live in, and how much dust is produced, dust every few months with a microfiber cloth. Wallpaper that is located in your kitchen will need wiping more regularly, dusting is not enough. Every few months a light wash is in order. Use a damp sponge with a small amount of dish soap, make sure the sponge isn't too wet, this can cause the wallpaper to loosen.

BACKSPLASH & WALL TILES

A backsplash is a great feature to add to your kitchen as it saves your walls from stains. That being said, it is important to frequently maintain your backsplash to keep that nice shiny look. Keep in mind that each type of backsplash will require a different type of maintenance.

TILE BACKSPLASH

It is recommended to use white vinegar to clean your tile backsplash. A soft cloth will work well to wipe the tile down. Sometimes tough stains are left behind, for these make a paste with baking soda and water and scrub. Rinse thoroughly with clean water and use a clean cloth to dry the tile to avoid water spots.

STEEL BACKSPLASH

Again, vinegar and water are recommended to wash your steel backsplash as it works well to remove grease and dirt. Make sure to rinse thoroughly with water. Take a stainless-steel polish and apply with a soft cloth.



MARBLE BACKSPLASH

For marble, it is important to use the right cleaner as it can become easily discolored. Wipe the backsplash first with a damp cloth and then immediately dry to avoid water spots. Using water and dish soap, wipe down the marble and scrub away stains. Rinse thoroughly.

STONE BACKSPLASH

Use a damp, soft cloth to wipe down stone. Water and dish soap work great on stone. Rinse with warm water and polish with a dry, clean cloth.

GLASS BACKSPLASH

Once again, vinegar and water are recommended to clean your glass backsplash. Using a soft, clean cloth, wipe down backsplash.

BASEBOARD MOULDING

Cleaning your baseboards is not a favored task by many, but cleaning your baseboards makes a big difference and goes a long way to making a room look dust-free and clean. One thing to keep in mind is that house work stirs up dirt, so save the baseboards for last, that way you are not wasting time and effort cleaning the same thing twice. Remove as much dirt as possible. Using a vacuum with a brush attachment will work the best. Begin to remove any stains and grime with warm water and dish soap.



Cabinets

CABINET DOORS & DRAWER FRONTS

- Using a cloth or sponge, dip into your bucket of warm water and dish soap and wring out.
- Vacuum the inside of your cabinet, crumbs and dust build up easily.
- Empty your bucket of dirty water, refill with fresh water and vinegar.
- When wiping the inside of the cabinet it is important not to let water pool, make sure your cloth is damp.
- With tough build-ups, you may use baking soda by pouring some on your wash cloth or sponge. It is recommended to clean your kitchen cabinets once a week, and the inside every few months.

CABINET HARDWARE

Kitchen cabinet hardware can collect a lot of build-up over time. Remember, each time you open your cabinets & drawers you are transporting dirt from your fingers onto the hardware. An easy way to clean your cabinet hardware is to disassemble them from the cabinets. That way there is no chance of missing any small details on the knobs or the back of your handles.

- With a screwdriver, remove all knobs from cabinets & drawers.
- Find a bowl big enough to place the knobs in, fill with soapy water and soak for 30 minutes.
- Using a soft-bristled toothbrush, scrub the knobs. For any wooden knobs use a soft cloth.
- Paying attention to the grooves of the knobs, work the toothbrush or cloth over the knobs removing grease and dirt.
- Wooden, glass and porcelain knobs, allow to dry completely.
- Assemble knobs back onto your cabinet drawers.



Countertops

LAMINATE

The benefit of laminate is that it is easy and simple to clean. You should be wiping your laminate counters daily with warm water. Laminate can last the life of a kitchen with proper maintenance. However, without care it can scratch and stain, use a cutting board at all times.

- Be wary of high heat or hot materials, as it is more like a wood counter in that it can be scorched and marked. A trivet for hot pans/trays should always be used.
- Certain spills will permanently stain laminate. Always be quick to wipe up your spills.
- Use a soft cloth to wipe the surface clean, getting rid of both dirt and dust.
- Making a paste, using baking soda and water, can remove most stubborn stains.

QUARTZ

Quartz is made from one of the hardest minerals on earth, making quartz countertops the most durable option for kitchens. There are some maintenance procedures to follow to ensure your countertops maintain their brightness. It is important to avoid quick changes in temperature and hard pressure. Always use non-abrasive cleaners.

- Wipe up spills as soon as possible.
- Using a soft cloth and mild detergent (non-bleach and non-abrasive) to wipe your countertop.
- Use a glass cleaner and soft sponge to clean up dried or heavy stains. For a good cleaning, spray a liberal amount of cleaner on the counters and let stand for 10 minutes. Wipe away with a soft cloth.
- For anything that needs to be scraped off, use a plastic putty knife.



MARBLE

Apply sealer to your marble countertops. Sealer soaks into the inside of the marble protecting the countertop from liquids and anything else that may soak in.

- Wipe away any spills and stains right away.
- Use a baking soda and water recipe to clean.
- Apply sealer directly to the surface.
- Using a clean cloth, spread the sealer across the countertop.
- Soaking for 3-5 minutes.
- Wipe away sealer.
- If this procedure has not removed all stains, repeat.

GRANITE

Granite is a popular choice for a countertop as it is durable, fashionable and does not require much maintenance. That being said, it does need some care to secure its good condition. As natural stones can be porous, this care includes the annual use of a sealer, and proper cleaning.

- Blot up spills immediately.
- Using warm water and dish soap, clean your countertop.
- Rinse well with clean water and dry with a soft cloth.
- Avoid high temperatures - this will damage your stone.

WOOD

Wood countertops are a popular choice for homeowners. Wood offers a natural beauty that will increase the appearance of any room. Wood countertops are said to be easily marked by stains, cuts and burns. You can protect your wood countertops from these issues by following these steps:

- Keep countertops clean from stains, build-ups and dullness.
- Pour generous amounts of warm mineral oil onto the countertop (make sure to use a food-grade oil, cooking oils should not be used). Oil will help prevent warping and cracking. Using a rag, rub the oil into the wood. Allow oil to soak for 20-30 minutes. Wipe with a cloth to remove excess oil. Fill in cracks with wax.
- Seal countertop to protect it from liquids. Select a urethane that is Health Canada/ FDA approved.

Appliances



REFRIGERATOR

The refrigerator is likely the most used appliance in your kitchen as well as the largest consumer of energy. Proper maintenance will cut your energy consumption and extend the life of your fridge.

- Clean off the condenser coils twice per year. Condenser coils remove heat from the fridge and the freezer. When dust and dirt attract to the coils, it is harder for the fridge to remove that heat.
- Clean and replace the gasket as needed. The gasket is the rubber seal that outlines the fridge and freezer doors. Clean periodically with a universal cleaner.
- Clean the interior weekly with a damp warm cloth.
- Deodorize your fridge to remove odors.
- Replace the water filtration system at least every six months.

STOVE & OVEN

Your oven and stove are your most used appliances in your home. Proper maintenance is necessary for minimum cleaning. One of the easiest things to do to keep your oven clean is to place a drip tray at the bottom.

OVEN

- Depending on how much you use your oven, it will need to be cleaned at least once, and as many as four times, per year.
- Remove the racks from the oven, even if you are using the unit's self-cleaning tool. The self-cleaning cycle can warp your racks.
- Soak racks in the sink for 10 minutes. With a sponge, scrub the racks clean.
- Be sure to unplug your oven first if you are cleaning by hand. Remember your oven is an electrical appliance, so be careful with liquids.

STOVE

- Using a cloth or a sponge, apply a light duty, non-abrasive cleaner. Be sure to apply the cleaner to the cloth/sponge rather than directly to the surface.
- If the control knobs are removable, then take off and soak to clean.
- If the control knobs are not designed to be removed, you will simply have to wipe them as well as you can.



GAS STOVE

It is important to follow a regular schedule when cleaning your gas stove as they are easily dirtied. Cleaning as you go is the best way to save yourself from a big mess.

- Start by removing grates and soaking them in hot, soapy water.
- Wipe stove of any crumbs.
- Spray your stove top with cleaner (vinegar and water), wipe down with a clean cloth.
- For the tough stains, simply apply dish soap to a small brush (toothbrush) and scrub away. Wipe the mess away with a damp cloth.
- Remove the burner caps and soak in warm, soapy water. If they are greasy, use dish soap and a scrub brush to remove the residue. Apply this method when washing the grates as well.
- Remove the burner heads by lifting straight up. Wash/wipe away any grease and food that was underneath them.

ELECTRIC COIL STOVE

Cleaning an electric coil stove can be a bit of a pain. They are easy enough to wipe, but removing stains and spills can be a hassle.

- Start by ensuring that you have not recently used your stove.
- Remove the burners and unplug them.
- With warm water and dish soap, use a sponge/cloth to wash the separated burners.
- To remove tougher stains, you will need a stronger cleaning agent.
- With a sponge/cloth wipe out the drip pans while you have the burners removed.



WALL OVEN

Ovens will run better and produce better baked goods when they are clean. To prevent damage, do not use abrasive or corrosive cleaners or applicators such as steel wool or scouring pads.

- Before cleaning/self-cleaning, remove the racks from the oven, soak in warm water and dish soap. Using a sponge/cloth to wipe them down.
- Wipe down the surface of the door outside, rinse surface.
- If you are cleaning by hand, use a mixture of vinegar and warm water to wipe down the inside of the oven.
- After the self-clean is complete, using a soapy sponge/cloth, wipe down the inside of the door. Wipe out the remaining water from the inside of the oven. Scrub the inside of the oven with a soapy sponge/cloth until the grease is removed.

RANGE & FUME HOOD

Range hoods tend to get dirty very fast, depending on how much you are using your stove, and also the area you live in. In more humid areas, like coastal environments, cleaning more frequently is necessary to maintain the finish. It is recommended to wipe down the outside of your range hood weekly.

- Disconnect power to range hood.
- Surfaces should be cleaned with warm water and dish soap using a soft cloth.
- Filters should be replaced every 3-6 months. Unless you have a stainless-steel filter. In that case, clean with dish soap and soft cloth.
- For exposed surfaces on the inside and outside, a damp cloth with degreaser should get the grease and grime off. Be careful not to get degreaser into the exhaust fan motor or the light fixtures as this may interrupt the normal function.
- Vent hood cleaning should be done at least every few months to prevent buildup.



MICROWAVE

An important part of keeping your appliances in working order involves proper maintenance. Simply following easy procedures can prolong the life of your microwave and ensure that it operates effectively and safely. Most people do not realize that food and liquid splatters can absorb energy.

- Wipe down the inside of your microwave weekly with warm water and dish soap.
- For tough to get spots, try heating a cup of warm water in the microwave for 60- 90 seconds. The steam should loosen any build up.

DEHUMIDIFIER

Humidity is water vapour, which affects perception of temperature with direct effect on sense of comfort: High humidity causes mold/dust mites to thrive, possible unpleasant odour, surface discolouration, and feels hot/stuffy. Low humidity makes us susceptible to dry eyes, throat and sinus irritations, and chills (generally harder to get warm). You can measure humidity with a hygrometer and regulate humidity with a humidistat, both are readily available at hardware stores.

TIPS & CARE

- Review the owner's manual for specific tips from the manufacturer.
- Set the dehumidifier humidity level to the correct setting (settings may differ so you can find this in your owner's manual).
- Use a hygrometer to monitor humidity levels and ensure it's functioning properly.
- Clean the water bucket or container frequently.
- Clean or replace the air filter once per year.
- Inspect the cooling coils for buildup of frost or ice.
- Make sure to wait at least 10 minutes before powering on your dehumidifier when you have to turn it off for maintenance.

Some signs of excessive humidity are moisture marks on walls and ceilings, warped or damaged wood, peeling wallpaper, blistered ceilings, creaky floors, sticking doors and cabinets, musty odor, or mold growth.

Generally, most homes will see 2-5 pints removed. After removal, you will feel and see the difference, as breathing will be easier and signs of condensation will disappear, there will be reduced mustiness of drapes & clothed furniture.



WASHER & DRYER

The washer and dryer are known to be two of the hardest working appliances in your home. It is important that your washer and dryer get regular maintenance.

WASHER

- A cup of vinegar ran through on a warm cycle will break down mineral deposits while cleaning out any dirt in the drain. It is recommended to do this every couple of months.
- For a front load washer use vinegar and warm water to wipe down weekly to avoid the smell of mold. Leave the door open between washes to allow to air out.
- Wipe the outside of your washer using warm water and vinegar.

DRYER

- Clean the lint filter for every load you do.
- It is recommended to monthly rinse the filter with warm water.
- Inspect the dryer exhaust on the exterior of the house every couple of months to ensure it's clear of debris. Use a vacuum and a damp rag to clear out any dust or dirt that has built up.

CENTRAL VACUUM

Central vacuums are great and a very popular choice in many households. They are long-lasting, quiet, and their motors can handle more usage than the typical portable unit. Maintaining your central vacuum is well worth it and only takes a few minutes.

- Empty out your receptacle regularly, 2-3 times per year, more if you have pets. If it gets full the system will not operate to its fullest capacity.
- It is important to make sure the inside of the bucket stays dry. It is safe to wash the bucket out with warm water and soap, just make sure it is completely dry when re-attaching.

TIPS

- Hang your hose on the hanger to keep it from getting harmed.
- Before hanging, disconnect power.
- Clean the roller bar on your power head weekly.



Plumbing

PLUMBING DRAINS

Drains and proper drainage are key parts of any home. Whenever water comes into a home, it has to have a way to leave after it's been used. This is why drains and proper drainage are so important.

HOW TO CLEAN YOUR DRAINS

If you are mindful of what you put down your drains, you really shouldn't need to clear them of debris very often, once a month or so. However, there are other drains that need to be checked on more regularly. The bathtub and the shower sink drains need to be checked regularly because that's usually where hair becomes a problem. Hair loss and other things like shampoo and toothpaste, take very little to block a drain pipe. Below are some recommended maintenance tips for your drains.

ONCE A WEEK

- Lift up the drainage stoppers in the bathroom sink, remove any debris, then rinse the stopper off and put it back.
- Remove the drain cover from your shower or bathtub drain and use a bent wire or a hair catching brush to clear out any debris that has accumulated there.

ONCE A MONTH

- Clean your garbage disposal with a sturdy disposer brush or grind up a few cups of ice and some table salt.
- In your bathtub, remove the overflow plate and raise the pop-up assembly to reach the spring or rocker arm. Remove any accumulated debris and rinse well.
- Use a bacteriological drain cleaner to maintain all of the drains in your home.

TIPS TO A CLOG-FREE DRAIN

- Reduce your dependence on the garbage disposal and start a compost bin.
- Get a quality plunger and/or an auger (drain snake) and learn how to use them. Some clogs will just happen, no matter how much we try to avoid them.
- Don't treat your drains like a garbage can. This is a very important one. Your garbage disposal, toilet, sinks and other drains in your home are not made to accommodate the size and composition of many of the things we put down them on a regular basis. Please be mindful of what goes down your drain.



KITCHEN SINK DISPOSAL

Kitchen disposals are great appliances, helping clean away unwanted scraps fast and easy. Normally they are self-cleaning but it is important to give them a little more attention from time to time. This will keep them running effectively and prevent odors. If a large object becomes lodged in your disposal you will need to remove it before cleaning. First, it is important that you turn off the fuse that supplies the power to the disposal, making sure there is no possible way it can be turned on.

- Use tongs, pliers, or any other appropriate tool to remove the lodged object. Flashlights could come in handy here for extra visibility. Be careful not to damage the grinder.
- Avoid putting your hands down the disposal.
- Flushing out the disposal with water will help remove any loose objects. Add some dish soap and run hot water allowing the water to flush through. Make sure to use hot water rather than cold, as hot water will liquefy any oil or grease build up.
- Grinding ice cubes and salt in your garbage disposal is a great way to remove tougher build up. Turn on disposal, run some cold water, and allow the ice and salt to be crushed by the blades.

HOT WATER TANK

There are benefits for caring for your hot water tank. Maintaining your hot water tank is important and will cost you nothing but your time improving its lifespan. Over time, with quantities mostly dependant on water hardness in your area, naturally occurring calcium will settle at the bottom of your tank.

- **Drain the hot water tank** – It really depends on your water hardness in your area. To keep a nice clean efficient running hot water tank, a flush every 4 months is recommended. If you are unaware on how to drain your hot water tank, please contact a plumber.
- **Check the temperature & pressure relief valve** – this valve on your hot water tank is an important piece of the safety equipment that ensures that your tank does not get over heated or not enough pressure. Again, if you are unaware, please contact a plumber.
- **Check for filters** – check your tank for filters that may need cleaning. Some tanks filters are located at the bottom of the tank, others on the top. Simply vacuuming out the filter will clean it.



BATHTUBS

Most tubs will stay clean if maintained regularly. Depending on how much use your bathtub is getting, it is recommended to clean your bathtub every 1-2 weeks to prevent soap build up and mildew from growing. It's important to know what kind of bathtub you have before applying abrasive cleaners to it.

PORCELAIN BATHTUB

- Most bathtub cleaners are porcelain safe. For discoloration and stubborn stains, cleaners like Ajax and Comet should do the trick.
- Form a paste with water, scrub the area and let stand for 30-45 minutes.
- Rinse and repeat if necessary.

ACRYLIC BATHTUBS

- Most non-abrasive bathroom cleaners are good to use if you rinse thoroughly afterwards.
- Cleaners like Ajax and Comet are not safe to use on acrylic as they can cause damage.

FIBERGLASS BATHTUBS

- Fiberglass should be cleaned with dish soap, laundry soap or simply making a paste mixture with baking soda and water.
- Rub the cleaner/paste on a clean sponge/brush and simply clean your tub.
- For tougher stains, let the cleaner sit for an hour.
- Rinse thoroughly.

BATHTUB TIPS

- Dry tub with a towel after each use to prevent water spots.
- Remove all products/toys/bathmats as rust forms when water is trapped.
- Rinse your tub out every time it is used.

SHOWERS & SURROUND ENCLOSURES

It is recommended to clean your shower every 2-3 weeks to prevent mildew from growing. Wiping down your shower with a towel after each use will eliminate some residue buildup. Use a non-abrasive cleaner to clean your shower.



TILE & GROUT

When grout has been in contact with water for periods of time, damage can occur. That being said, cleaning is not the only maintenance that is required.

- Seal the tile and grout twice a year for extra protection.
- A yearly inspection for loose or damaged tile and cracked grout, repair as needed.

CAULK & SEALANT

The purpose of caulking and sealant is to ensure that water remains within the shower/bath. After time, caulk & sealant starts to deteriorate allowing water in. Often these leaks are difficult to catch until they have caused damage within the wall chamber.

- A yearly inspection is required for deterioration in and around the shower/bathtub.
- If your shower/bath is located on an upper floor, inspect the ceiling below your bathroom for leaks.
- In the daily use of your shower/bath if it appears that the caulking & sealant is missing, we recommend that it is replaced promptly.

SHOWER DOORS

Whether your shower doors swing or slide, they should be inspected regularly for water build-up along the base or track of the door. It is recommended to wipe these areas out every 1-2 weeks. If there appears to be water built up, then there may be a problem with your track assembly not draining properly. Shower doors should be cleaned with an abrasive cleaner.

PLUMBING FIXTURES

Along with regular maintenance of your shower/tub, a regular wipe with warm water and a mild soap on your plumbing fixtures is in order. The use of abrasive cleaners may damage your fixtures.



SINKS

Sinks usually become slowly blocked as well so it is important to keep your drains clean. It is recommended to clean your drain every 1-2 weeks. Clean your drain out before wiping down your sink to save you unnecessary work.

- Using a non-abrasive cleaner and a soft cloth, wipe your sink clean. Rinse thoroughly.
- Remove drain stopper and clear out any hair/debris that has compiled. Vinegar can be used to clean the soap residue off the stopper.

TOILETS

For your health, it is important to keep a clean toilet. Bacteria buildup on toilets can cause harm and potentially make you ill. It is recommended to clean your toilet every 3-7 days.

- Add toilet cleaner to the inside of the bowl and underneath the rim, allow time to soak.
- Scrub the interior of the bowl clean with a toilet brush.
- Using a household cleaner, spray the outside of the bowl, lid and seat. Wipe clean with paper towel or a clean rag.
- Wipe the floor surrounding the toilet to ensure you have caught the over-spray from cleaner.



Electrical

CIRCUIT BREAKERS

Circuit Breakers should be turned on and off once a year.

- Turn off electrical equipment on the circuit being tested. It is important to turn off the freezer, refrigerator and air conditioner because their motors can be damaged by the frequent power interruptions.
- Switch each circuit breaker off and on three times.
- Turn all the breakers back on. Make sure to plug your freezer, refrigerator and air conditioner back in after these steps.

OUTLETS & SWITCHES

An outlet with a cracked or broken face, or one that is loose in the wall, could mean exposed electrical contacts and potential short or a shock hazard. A receptacle with a burned or brownish appearance might be a sign of a previous short or loose connection. Not sure if an outlet is grounded? You can find out by plugging a receptacle tester (available at home supply stores) into the outlet. It will tell you if a ground wire is present, and if the outlet has proper polarity. If you are still unsure, please contact an electrician.



FURNACE

While some aspects of furnace maintenance can be complex, and they are best left to the professionals, regular maintenance to your furnace is important for efficient operation. Keeping your furnace running properly can save you a lot of money on heating costs and help avoid expensive repairs in the future. The furnace filter should be replaced or cleaned at the beginning of the heating season and about once a month during periods of continuous use. Cleaning your filter is an easy and inexpensive way to reduce your energy costs and improve your indoor air quality. The best way to inspect your filter is to take it out and hold it up to the light. If it looks clogged, replace it with a new filter.

- Start by turning off the power to your furnace.
- Locate the service panel, open it - you may need a screwdriver or other tools.
- Find the furnace filter - it will be near the intake/outtake blower. If dust is visible on the filter, remove and clean it.
- Once you've removed the filter, rinse it with water.
- Allow filter to dry completely.
- Place filter back in furnace, put the service panel back on, and turn your furnace on.

Alarms



CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless colorless gas, alarms should be installed on each floor. Knowing your CO detector is properly working is a serious matter. You can test a detector to ensure it can identify the level of CO in the air. Pressing the Test button on the detector will only tell you whether the device has power from an outlet or batteries.

To test your CO detector accurately, follow the guidelines below:

- Install the CO detectors correctly - installed more than 10 feet from carbon monoxide sources.
- Test each CO detector for proper function - press the Test button on each detector to ensure it is drawing power. A high-pitched, loud beeping should go off.
- Test CO detector with a low-level CO source - confirm the digital readout CO detector is detecting CO. Test it with a substance that will emit low levels of gas, such as a lit cigarette or a lit incense wand. As you move the source within 8-10 inches of the detector, the digital display should show presence of carbon monoxide.
- Use a CO detector test kit - these kits can be purchased where you buy your detector.

SMOKE ALARM

Smoke alarms are a key part of a home fire escape plan. When there is a fire, smoke spreads fast. Working smoke alarms give you early warning so you can exit your home quickly. Install smoke alarms inside and outside each bedroom and sleeping area.

Install alarms on every level of the home, even the basement. Interconnected smoke alarms are best, when one alarm sounds, they all sound. Test all smoke alarms at least once a month by pressing the Test button. Smoke alarms should be placed on the ceiling or high on a wall. Best to keep smoke alarms away from the kitchen to reduce false alarms, about 10 feet from the stove. For the hearing impaired, make sure your alarms have strobe lights. Smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years.



ROUTINE TEST AND MAINTENANCE

- Smoke alarm is securely fastened to the wall/ceiling.
- Shows no evidence of physical damage.
- Ventilation holes on the smoke alarm are clean and free of debris.
- Smoke alarm signal sounds when the Test device is operated.

ANNUAL TEST AND MAINTENANCE

- Smoke alarm is securely fastened to the wall/ceiling.
- Shows no evidence of physical damage.
- Smoke alarm has been vacuumed.
- Ventilation holes on the smoke alarm are cleaned and free of debris.
- Smoke alarm signal sounds when the Test device is operated.
- Batteries have been replaced and securely connected to the clips.
- Battery terminals are free of corrosion and signs of leakage.



Exterior

EXTERIOR DRAINAGE

One of the number one causes of foundation damage and flooding basements is poor drainage. Rain water and landscape run off can puddle in low spots in your yard. In order to keep your home on a solid foundation the best thing you can do is stay on top of maintaining the exterior drainage of your home.

SUMP PUMP

A sump pump can be an effective option for preventing water damage. Installed in the basement, these units sense when the water from rain or snowmelt (depending your area) is rising in the pump and approaching floor level. The incoming water is then pumped outside before it can damage the home. Sump pumps are fairly low-maintenance, but you can help keep your unit operating well by regular inspections.

- Checking for a discharge line to make sure it is not stopped up or frozen. If necessary, unclog the air vent hole in the line.
- Checking the inlet screen to ensure that it's not clogged with residue (do this check three to four times per year.)
- Scan and remove any visible debris, mud or rocks.
- By slowly pouring a bucket of water into the pit you are testing to see if the float will rise. The float should rise with the water level, engaging the unit to start pumping. If pumping does not begin, check to see that the unit is plugged in. It may be possible that your float switch or check valve may be at fault.

SEPTIC SYSTEMS

A septic system is a highly efficient, self-contained, underground wastewater treatment system. Since septic systems treat and dispose of household wastewater onsite, they are often more economical than centralized sewer systems in rural areas where lot sizes are larger and houses are spaced widely apart. Septic systems are also simple in design, which make them generally less expensive to install and maintain. And by using natural processes to treat the wastewater onsite, usually in a homeowner's backyard, septic systems don't require the installation of miles of sewer lines, making them less disruptive to the environment.



MAINTENANCE

If you own a septic system, it is important that it be properly maintained. How often you need to pump the solids out of your septic tank depends on three major factors:

- The number of people in your household
- The amount of wastewater generated (based on the number of people in the household and the amount of water used)
- The volume of solids in the wastewater (ex. using a garbage disposal will increase the number of solids) Although your septic tank absorption field generally does not require maintenance, you should adhere to the following rules to protect and prolong its functional life. First, do not drive over the absorption field with vehicles, do not plant trees or shrubbery in the absorption field area (because the roots can get into the lines and plug them), and do not cover the absorption field with hard surfaces, such as concrete or asphalt. Grass is the best cover, because it will help prevent erosion and help remove excess water. Make sure to divert surface runoff water from roofs, patios, driveways, and other areas away from the absorption field.

EXTERIOR FAUCETS

Depending on the region you live in, if the temperature drops below freezing then you should protect your outside water faucets by draining the water completely out of them. When water freezes, it expands by approximately 9%. This expansion can exert over 100,000 psi of force, which is more than enough to rupture your faucet or pipe, causing a flood inside your home.

- Close inside valve - find the valve inside your home that is the closest valve to the wall of the pipe that goes through to your outside water faucet.
- Drain inside valve - unscrew drain plug from inside valve. Place a bucket under this valve, and unscrew the small drain plug on the side of this valve. This will allow the water to drain out.
- Disconnect garden hose or any other hoses you may have.
- Open outside valve - allow any trapped water out, close valve after drained.
- Put the drain plug back on the inside valve.

After the winter season, to get use of your exterior faucets, all you need to do is re-open the inside valve. Before doing that, first double check to be sure that the outside faucet is closed before you open the inside valve, that will prevent water flowing outside.



GUTTERS

For gutters to properly serve their purpose, it is important that they are clear of leaves and debris. If they are not, drain outlets will dam up and rainwater will fill the gutters, overflow, and eventually pull the gutters loose from the weight. You should plan to clean your gutters at least twice a year – more often if your home is located beneath trees or if you're located in a region with common storms.

- Choose a sturdy ladder, and place it on a firm, level base. If you need to lean an extension ladder against a gutter, protect the gutter by placing a short piece of 2 by 4 inside it. Be sure not to lean out over the sides.
- If you are comfortable working from the rooftop and your roof has a very low pitch, this can be easier than working from a ladder. Never work on a roof in wet, icy, or windy conditions. Wear non-slip shoes, and never lean over the edge or work near powerlines.
- Wear heavy work gloves to protect your hands since gutters often have sharp edges or screw points.
- It is helpful to have a bucket for collecting debris and a drop cloth for protecting areas beneath the gutter. This will make for an easier clean up after the gutters are cleaned.
- Scoop out loose debris - starting at a drain outlet at the low end of a gutter, scoop out loose debris, working away from the drain outlet.
- Blast out the gutters with a hose - using a high-pressure nozzle, wash out each length of gutter, working toward the drain outlet.
- Clear obstructions in drainpipes - if water doesn't drain through the drainpipes freely, try flushing the debris down them with a hose. If that does not work, try using a plumber's auger (snake) to free and pull out the debris.
- An easy method used by some people on low sloped roofs is to blow dry debris out of the gutters with a leaf blower. If you decide to use this method, it is very important to wear goggles and a dust mask.



WINDOWS & DOORS

With simple care and cleaning, your windows and doors can keep their beautiful appearance for years. Your windows and doors will get dirty with time. Often, heavy rains will wash the vinyl clean, sometimes the rain is just not enough.

- Wash using a mild detergent and a soft cloth. Do not clean windows or doors with high pressure, it could crack or destroy the caulking around the window/door.
- Dirt that is difficult to remove, you may need a stronger household cleaner.
- You may wish to use a mildly abrasive cleanser, but the use of any abrasive material could scratch the surface of the glass and window or door frame.
- Do not use liquid grease remover, strong soaps or detergents containing organic solvents, nail polish remover, and furniture polish. These items could affect the surface look of the vinyl.
- Streak free windows – use 30% white vinegar 70% water. Use a soft cloth or paper towel to wipe clean, rubbing in different directions. Rinse windows first if there is excessive dirt and debris.

TREE INSPECTION

As a home owner, it is important to do a walk around and inspect your yard for a dead tree that could put you in danger. As well, check for trees that may be interfering with electrical lines.

- In the canopy look for dead and broken branches, eventually these will fall out of the tree and can potentially cause harm.
- Look for cracks and seams especially where two branches come together, this is a structural weak spot that may be concerning.
- Bulges, bumps, holes, sap flow, missing bark, and animal damage can be entry points for pests to gain access and perhaps harm the tree.
- Exposed roots around the base of the tree.
- If there are any trees in your yard that are a harm to your environment, contact an arborist. They will can either fix the problem, or calculate the risk of the tree falling and the likely objects it could damage. That calculation will help you determine whether to keep the tree alive, or to remove the tree.



BUGS & TERMITES

Many people who purchase a home from out of state think that the clean inspection means smooth sailing from there on, however, if you do not have a termite problem when you purchase the home, do not simply wait until a problem occurs to then have a treatment plan done. Conducting annual inspections either by a licensed pest control expert, or by becoming alert to termite activity yourself is invaluable.

An annual termite control contract with a reputable pest control company provides peace of mind for many. They run roughly \$100 to \$200 a year. Some use an inground bait or repellent, and others use insecticide injected into a series of drilled holes in the foundation. Even if you are vigilant during the home buying process, termites might show up sooner or later. They thrive on warm, moist conditions, therefore, knowing how to avoid termite damage can be critical. The smartest path as a homeowner is to be prepared for them so they do not devalue or destroy your home. How will you know if your home is at risk of infestation?

Some signs of infestation are as follows:

- Termite feasting: look for buckling wood, warped wood, hollow sounding wood, or appearance of water damage.
- Swarming: small swarms of winged termites looking for new places to expand their colonies, you may find wings in your home, around windowsills, light fixtures, etc.
- Dirt may be found in places it doesn't belong such as windowsills, inside walls and baseboards, etc.
- Fecal pellets: look for small holes in furniture or walls and keep an eye out for pellets falling out of the holes.



Decks & Patios

Decks are a great investment, returning about 80% of its original cost. It's a good idea to create a routine of upkeep that will protect your deck and prevent expensive repairs. An unwashed deck can form mold and mildew, which can cause rot. Inspect areas where deck boards cross joints - the structural members underneath the decking. Late spring is when you should be washing your deck.

- Remove debris from between deck boards.
- Protect all shrubs and plantings by wetting them and covering them with plastic.
- Thoroughly sweep the deck.
- Choose an appropriate cleanser.

WOOD DECK

Use a standard deck cleaner and follow its directions. Some will require you to wet the deck first, some will not. Use a paint roller, a garden sprayer, or a brush broom to apply the cleaner without letting it pool. To prevent streaks, do not dry the deck until you have scrubbed it clean. Let it soak according to the cleaner instructions. Rinse thoroughly with clean water.

COMPOSITE DECK

Use a cleaner specifically for composite material. Scrub with a soft brush. Do not use high pressure water to wash as it can permanently damage the decking and will void warranty. Remove rust and leaf stains with a deck brightener containing oxalic acid.

VINYL DECK

Warm water and a mild soap will do the trick to remove mold, mildew, and dirt. Choose a cloudy day when the decking is cool and the sun won't evaporate the water to clean the deck. Scrub in a circular motion using a stiff broom, rinse thoroughly. Let the deck dry, wait two days before sealing.



MID-SUMMER

It is important to inspect your deck again. When the weather is warm and dry it's a good time to give your deck another close inspection. Areas within 6 inches of the ground or close to sources of water should be paid more attention to.

- Look for signs of rot - check stairs, and each perimeter post.
- Inspect the ledger.
- Check the remaining joists, posts, and beams - all the hardware underneath may be rusting. Replace anything that is rusting.
- Check the railing - give it a good shake to be sure posts are not loose or damaged.

EARLY FALL

Is a good time to wash and seal your deck if you didn't get a chance to in the spring. As long as the temperatures are mild you are good. Trim nearby bushes and trees.

- Keep corners free of leaves and debris.
- Keep nearby gutters in good repair. Move planters, chairs, and tables occasionally to avoid discoloring the deck.

SEALING YOUR DECK

Make sure you have a two-day period when you'll have clear skies and moderate temperatures. Use a pole sander to lightly sand the deck, removing any furriness caused by washing.

- Replace any missing or popped nails/screws.
- Apply the sealer or stain. Use a roller to apply the sealer to the decking. Use brushes and small rollers for railings. Do not let the sealant dry in a puddle.



Roofs

CHIMNEY

Chimney maintenance is important for safety reasons. To eliminate the risk of fire or inhalation of dangerous carbon monoxide gas, it is important for you to make chimney maintenance part of your home loss prevention plan. Both metal and masonry chimneys require maintenance so that the smoke and gases are ventilated properly. At the very least, you should have your chimney inspected annually before each heating season.

- Have your chimney cleaned on a regular basis to reduce build-up. Avoid using chemical chimney cleaners, as they are not effective in removing creosote buildup.
- Make sure your masonry chimney has a flue liner in place to reduce the possibility that the masonry could absorb creosote.
- Replace cracked or damaged liners, as they will allow creosote to accumulate and heat to escape. The best way to avoid a house fire caused by the chimney is to hire a professional chimney sweep to inspect for cracks. They will also clean your chimney.

CARING FOR YOUR FLAT ROOF

A flat roof has a pitch of only a few degrees, meaning that water drainage efficiency will always be less than that of a traditional pitched roof. You should schedule a regular review of your flat roof with the changing of the seasons as well as following any significant weather systems (rain/windstorms, snowstorms, etc.). Before beginning any maintenance, you will need to confirm that your flat roof was designed to accommodate your body weight for extended periods of time; if the roof was not designed to be an outdoor area, standing on the roof could damage the very gentle slope needed to prevent water ponding, therefore, you will have to hire a professional for your regular maintenance.

Maintenance Tips for your Flat Roof Home (to be completed 4 times per calendar year)
Sweep off leaves and debris to prevent turning to mulch, trim back any tree branches to provide 3.3ft clearance between the roof edge and the tree, remove any vegetation growing on the roof (Keep in mind that vegetation growing on the roof surface is a sign of water ponding). Check flashing for cracked caulking, check for small punctures or noticeable worn spots, flush drains periodically with a garden hose to ensure the free flow of water below the roof line – No flow? Contact a professional plumber to prevent water damage to roof.

**WHAT IS PONDING?**

Standing pools that do not drain or in dry conditions will be concave with water stain around it; caused when runoff is not sufficient. Consider installing hoppers and/or an automatic pump.

WHAT IS BLISTERING?

Air trapped between layers of roof material, which can puncture easily when the air heats up, allowing water through roof. You will need to contact a professional to assess the roof surface for low areas.

MAJOR WEATHER/ROUTINE DEBRIS TIPS:

Remove snow/debris carefully as soon as possible. Internally, check ceilings for signs of water leaking, blocked drains, or unusual amounts of ponding water. Also check for damage from trees, accumulation of debris, blisters, holes, indentations/cracks, and monitor freeze/thaw patterns for expanding or cracking.



Driveways

CONCRETE DRIVEWAYS

Very little maintenance is involved with a concrete driveway. Cleaning your concrete driveway and keeping it sealed are the best measures you can take to keep it looking its best. Clean and re-apply sealer as needed.

- Remove stains immediately - while a sealer will help protect concrete from stain absorption, it's still a good idea to remove oil, gasoline, grease and other spills as soon as possible.
- Avoid using de-icing chemicals - these can cause surface damage. Products containing ammonium nitrates and ammonium sulphates are harmful because they will attack the concrete chemically.
- Treat with care - although concrete is one of the most durable paving materials for driveway construction, the typical residential driveway isn't built to support heavy vehicles.

PAVED DRIVEWAYS

Proper maintenance on your driveway can greatly extend its life and appearance, protecting your investment. Please see below some tips for maintaining your paved driveway.

- Keep driveway clear of any solvents for extended periods of time.
- If weather conditions are extremely hot, do not leave items like a barbecue out.
- Spray weeds as soon as you see them growing in your driveway, weeds will cause cracks to grow bigger.
- Remove stains immediately.
- Fill in any cracks or holes you may have with an asphalt crack-filler.



Central Air Conditioning

Central air conditioners have two components that are separated: the condenser and the evaporator. The condenser is usually located outside the house on a concrete slab. The evaporator coil is mounted in the main duct junction above the furnace.

EVAPORATOR

The evaporator for the central air system is located directly above the furnace. It may not be accessible, but if it is, you should clean it once a year.

- Remove foil-wrapped insulation at front of plenum, it's probably taped in place. Carefully remove tape, you will have to replace it later. Behind insulation is the access plate, which is held in place by several screws, remove screws.
- Clean entire underside of evaporator unit with a brush.
- Clean tray below evaporator unit. This tray carries condensation away from the evaporator. Pour 1 tablespoon of household bleach into weep hole in tray to prevent fungus growth.
- Put unit back in place, reinstall plates, and tape insulation back over it.
- Turn air conditioner on, check for air leaks. Seal any leaks with duct tape.



CONDENSER

In most air conditioning systems, the condenser unit is located outside the house and is known to accumulate dirt and debris from trees, mowing the lawn, and airborne dust. It has a fan that circulates air across the condenser coil. The coil must be cleaned on the intake side. Before you turn off the power to the air conditioner, check to see which direction the air moves across the coils.

- Keep the ground maintained around the condenser unit. Cut down the grass, weeds, or vines that are growing around, they could be obstructing air flow.
- Clean condenser with commercial coil cleaner, available at refrigerator supply stores. Flush coil clean, do not use hose, let dry.
- Clean fins with soft brush to remove debris. You may have to remove a protective grill to reach them. Clean the fins very carefully, do not use a garden hose. They're made of a light-gauged aluminum and are easily damaged.
- Check concrete pad on which the condenser is located to ensure it is level.
- Outside condensers units should be protected from elements to prevent leaf blockage and ice damage. During fall and winter, cover the condenser unit with a cover made to fit the shape of the unit or use heavy plastic sheeting secured with sturdy cord.
- There is a refrigerant coolant used in most air conditioning systems called Freon. If the system does not contain the proper amount of Freon, low or no cooling will take place. For Freon problems, call a professional service person to recharge system. Do not try to charge your system's refrigerant lines.