



Indoor Air Quality



Humidity

Controlling humidity in a home is one of the most misunderstood elements of maintaining a safe and comfortable home. Sources of humidity include our bodies, houseplants, standing water, showers and baths, unsealed foundation walls and floors, and most of all, outside air entering the house through unintended openings. New homes, when built correctly, should not have any need for running a humidifier or dehumidifier. If you need a humidifier or dehumidifier to maintain a comfortable level of humidity between 30% and 50%, chances are good that your home has some issues that need to be addressed beyond just humidity.

High humidity is the most dangerous condition for homes in any climate. Excess humidity provides the perfect environment for the growth of mold and dust mites, contributes to wood rot and material degradation, window condensation and frost. Humid air also makes us feel hotter than the actual air temperature. Simply lowering the humidity of the air makes us "feel" cooler. An important point to mention here is that an efficiently operating air conditioner removes moisture from the air making it feel cooler. If your air conditioner is oversized for the space it conditions, it may be cooling the air but not removing the humidity.

Low humidity is usually encountered in the winter months when the outdoor humidity is very low since cold air has much less capacity to retain moisture. Dry air in your home causes itchy skin, bloody noses, and a greater sensitivity to drafts and chills. Dry air makes us feel colder than the air temperature in the room since our perspiration evaporates much more quickly.

HUMIDITY READINGS IN YOUR HOME RANGED
FROM _____ TO _____

- * Be sure to run your bathroom exhaust fan for 20 minutes after each shower
- * When cooking large meals, be sure to use the exhaust fan over your stove
- * Basement walls and foundations receive moisture through the surrounding soil. Be sure that your gutters and downspouts are clean and direct water away from the foundation walls.
- * Sump pump pits should be sealed airtight, both for humidity and gas control. Radon and methane gases find their way into our homes through holes and cracks in the foundation.
- * Monitor humidity levels with a simple hygrometer (humidity meter) available at any hardware store or home center.
- * Window condensation is often the result of moisture laden air being trapped between a warm surface and a cold surface. If your windows have condensation on the indoor side of the glass, the air is either very humid, or not being allowed to freely flow over the window. Opening the drapes or blinds often solves this problem.
- * If your windows have condensation trapped between the panes, or on the pane of a storm window, indoor air is being leaked out of the interior of the house. Caulk the gaps and install new weatherstripping.