

Breathing Easy

Are you aware that bacteria and other contaminants are being trapped in your home? Did you know that excess humidity can challenge the structural integrity of your home? Did you know your home needs to "breathe" properly?

1. Excess Indoor Humidity

In today's tightly constructed energy efficient homes excess humidity can build up from showers, cooking, house plants and other sources. This excess indoor humidity can condense on windows in the winter time and cause serious damage to the windows and surrounding building materials. It can also cause health problems by contributing to mold growth.

2. Indoor Air Pollution

Certain types of sources such as building materials, carpeting, and furnishings release pollutants on an ongoing basis. Intermittent indoor pollution can be caused by smoking, malfunctioning heaters, furnaces, or stoves. Other sources include the use of various household cleaners, solvents, paint strippers, and pesticides. High concentrations of these pollutants can remain in the air for long periods of time without an adequate air exchange rate. Indoor pollution can cause headaches, sinus irritation, and respiratory problems. It can also be a contributing factor to asthma.

What Causes This?

Lack of fresh air within your home is the prime cause. The rate at which outdoor air replaces indoor air is described as the air exchange rate. When there is little infiltration, natural ventilation, or mechanical ventilation, the air exchange rate is low and pollutant levels can increase.

Indoor air quality is important to your health and the health of your home. Today's homes face two major challenges:



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What Can Be Done?

The simplest approach to reducing excess humidity and lowering the concentrations of indoor air pollutants in your home is to increase the amount of outdoor air coming indoors. Unfortunately most home heating and cooling systems do not mechanically bring fresh air into the house. During the warmer months opening windows and doors, operating window or attic fans, or running a window air conditioner with the vent control open increases the outdoor ventilation. A better year round option is to utilize a Heat Recovery Ventilator (HRV).

What's An HRV?

The HRV is a mechanical device designed to efficiently deliver a steady supply of fresh air into the home while at the same time recovering energy from the equal amount of stale air being exhausted. This device originated in Canada at the University of Saskatchewan during the energy crisis of the 1970's. At that time people realized that there was a real need to improve energy efficiency by making houses tighter. This quickly led to the need of controlled ventilation.

An HRV functions as the lungs of the house. During the colder months it draws fresh air into the house and warms it with the energy of the air being exhausted. These two air paths do not mix thereby ensuring a continuous supply of fresh clean air. The same process of energy exchange occurs during the summer months when the air conditioning is on. An HRV will keep your family breathing easy.

How Do I Buy And Maintain An HRV?

Adding an HRV to your home ensures your family will benefit from the best air quality. Before you buy an HRV be sure to talk to your heating and cooling professional.

The following are a few tips to help you get the best results from your HRV purchase:

- Have your contractor utilize a sizing guide to right size your HRV
- Your HRV needs to be tailored to meet the specific requirements of your home, and localized ventilation areas such as bathrooms need to be incorporated into your system
- Ask if the HRV you're purchasing has a separate summer (ERV) core for use in the summer months. This core allows the transfer of your home's cool air conditioned air into the hot incoming air and also shifts the incoming humidity into the outgoing air. This permits cooling season ventilation without loading the air conditioning system
- Ask how upgraded controls will give you the best performance
- User friendly electronic controls provide easy operation
- Filters should be washed with mild soapy water, rinsed, and replaced every 6 months
- Filters will last several years before you need to purchase new ones
- Inspect, clean, or unblock outside hoods and screens regularly
- Clean the winter core, summer core, condensate drain, and pans every 3 months
- Have your contractor check your system annually and verify that it's properly balanced



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