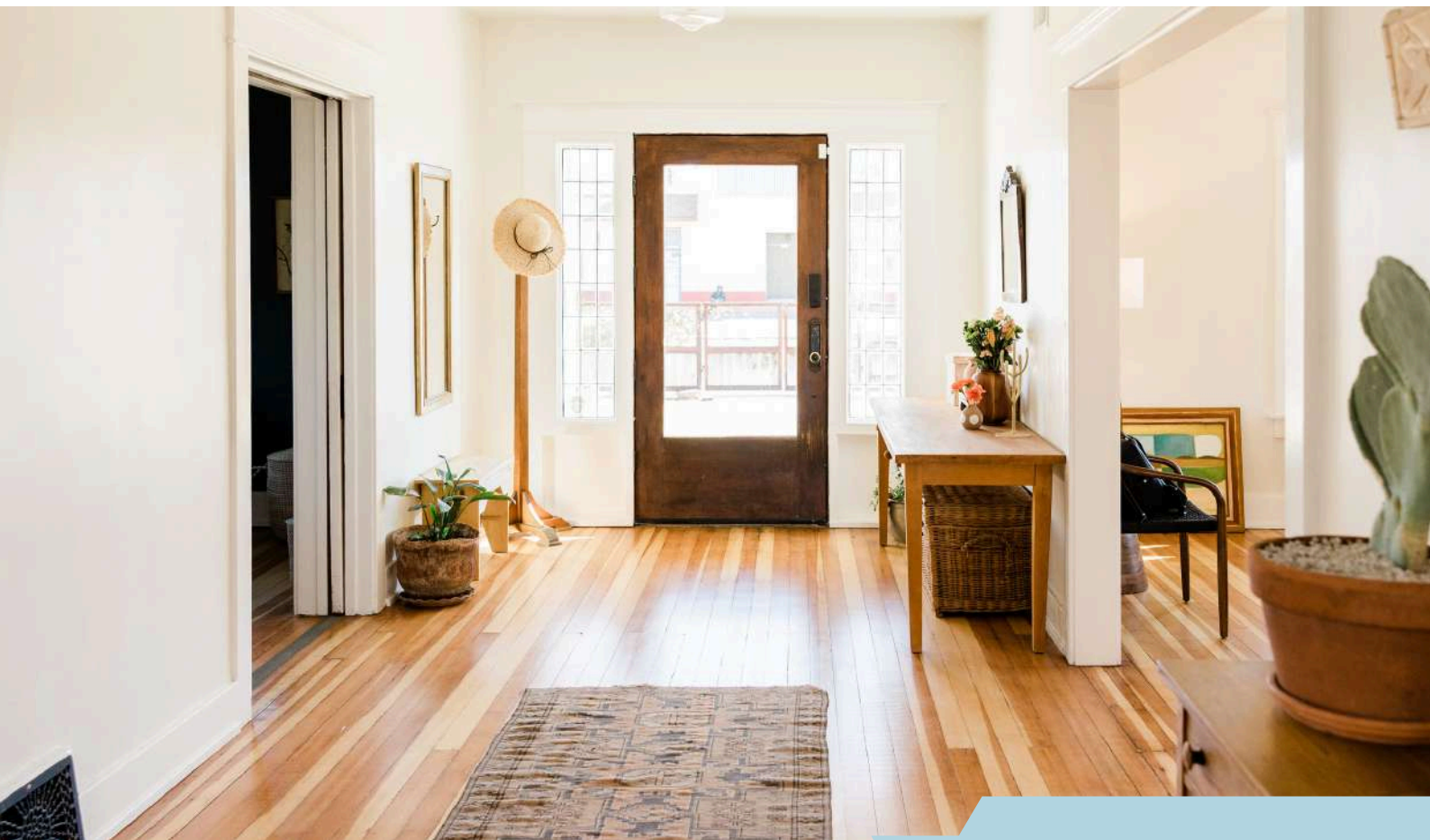


Preventive Home Care: How to Avoid Common Home Problems



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Abstract

Regular home maintenance is essential for protecting both the value and safety of your property. From the roof to the foundation small issues can quickly turn into major repairs if left unattended. This guide explores practical and affordable steps homeowners can take to prevent common problems before they escalate. Covering everything from moisture and mould prevention to pest control seasonal checklists and knowing when to call in professionals this PDF serves as a helpful resource for anyone looking to maintain a healthy safe and cost effective living environment.

Getting Started

Taking care of your home does not have to be overwhelming or expensive. With a simple routine and the right knowledge you can prevent many of the most common and costly household problems. The key is consistency. Small actions like clearing gutters inspecting your roof or sealing gaps around windows can make a big difference over time. This guide is designed to help you understand what to look for and when to act whether you are a new homeowner or simply want to get more proactive with maintenance. Let us begin with the basics and work our way through the most important areas of your home.

Why Is Regular Home Maintenance So Crucial?



Repairs and maintenance

Key points

- A regular maintenance schedule will help you to prevent or identify problems early.
- Develop an annual schedule to check and maintain the inside and outside of your home.
- Get expert advice and services where needed, especially for specific problems such as leaks, cracks and settlement, damp, salt, or termites.
- If you have an older home, it may include hazardous materials, such as asbestos or lead paint. Do not try to remove hazardous materials yourself. Get expert advice. Sometimes the best course of action is to seal the material, rather than removing it.

General maintenance

Repairs and maintenance extend the life of your home, improve its liveability and reduce health risks. With advice from a builder or designer, create a repair and maintenance schedule that prioritises urgent concerns and prevents larger problems from developing. Some of the examples listed below may require advice and repairs by a suitably qualified professional.

Outside your home:

- Check external painting and touch up as required.
- Repair or seal broken glass and windows with air leaks to reduce draughts and heat loss. Repair windows that are jammed or 'painted closed' and make them operable to improve cross ventilation. A variety of sealing strips, tapes and seals are available from hardware outlets.
- Protect and restore old windows and joinery.
- Check subfloor areas for dampness. Divert groundwater and provide additional subfloor ventilation where existing ventilation is inadequate.
- Check and replace corroded sacrificial anodes in hot water tanks, and check the pressure release valve for operation and leaks.
- Install, repair or replace insect screens to encourage natural cooling and 'night purging' in hot weather.
- Replace insulation that has been moved or damaged in ceilings and fill insulation gaps. Older insulation can settle and loses its insulating properties. Check the depth and 'loft' and replace as necessary.
- Replace cracked roof tiles and repair roof ridging, if necessary.
- Clean gutters regularly and check for leaks. Ensure adequate fall to drainage outlet.
- Trim trees and shrubs away from the house.

Inside your home:

- Check fridge door seals and replace if necessary. If your fridge is not energy efficient, now might be the time to upgrade to one with a high energy star rating.
- Install smoke detectors in correct locations and check the batteries in them.
- Check for air leaks. Fit dampers to chimney flues (or insulate if unused), seal around windows and doors, and fill cracks and gaps to reduce draughts.
- A thermal imaging camera can help to detect water leaks, shifted insulation and other issues. A qualified professional can assist.
- Have your heating and cooling systems checked and maintained by a qualified professional.
- Paint and repair walls and ceilings with low-VOC (volatile organic compound) paints to improve amenity and air quality.
- Consider replacing doors so you can 'zone' areas to control heat flow.
- Remove worn carpets, which can be a source of dust mites and allergens.

Specific problems

Leaks

Leaks can quickly lead to significant damage.

- Roof leaks are often best detected when it is raining, because you can trace the water from the wet spot back to the source. Replace loose roof fixings and seal holes with silicone or bitumen-backed tape and a heat gun (do it yourself, or get a builder).
- Cavity wall leaks are often caused by failed cavity capping or flashings and blocked weepholes along the base of the wall or over windows and door openings. Replace flashings (get a plumber and bricklayer), clear weepholes, and remove and replace bricks where necessary to get rid of debris and mortar droppings (do-it-yourself, or use a bricklayer).
- Floor leaks can commonly be traced to leaking pipes or to moisture under concrete slabs being forced up through cracks and fissures by hydrostatic pressure. They can be rectified by repairing or replacing drainage (use a plumber) or installing adequate, up-slope groundwater drainage or diversion (get professional advice).
- Shower recesses may be a source of leaking if waterproofing is inadequate or has been damaged. Check and repair if necessary (get a waterproofing expert or qualified tradesperson).
- Check water supply and drainage pipes for signs of rust and/or leakage. Repair or replace as necessary and, while you are there, insulate exposed hot water pipes (get a plumber).

Cracks and settlement

Cracks and settlement can be cosmetic or an indication of more serious structural problems. Common causes are:

- 'heave' (soil expanding and pushing the ground upwards) of reactive (clayey) soils
- slip by unstable or disturbed soils
- settlement (compression and sinking of the ground) under poorly prepared footings
- variable soil moisture content causing uneven foundation swelling or heave due to drying by tree roots
- poor drainage.

Seek professional advice from an engineer before repairing. Sometimes repairs can act as wedges and increase structural damage when foundations swell in the next wet or dry season.

Rectification can involve underpinning of footings to provide better support or piercing to ensure that each section of the building is supported by material with similar bearing value (that is, it all moves by the same amount). Sometimes, underfloor drainage is required to ensure that internal walls bear on material with similar moisture content to the sun and wind-exposed external walls, to create even heave. Control joints that accommodate movement while remaining sealed may be required, if even heave is not achievable.

Moisture and Mould: Silent Destroyers in Your Home



Mould infestation is a serious household problem that can lead to structural damage, indoor air pollution, and health deterioration. Mould is a common type of fungus that often grows in dark, humid, and damp environments, such as bathroom walls, shower areas, curtains, basement ceilings, and the area underneath the kitchen sink.

While standard house cleaning targets visible dust, dirt and grime on various surfaces, mould and mildew stains require specialised products and techniques for

effective removal. The cleaning process usually begins by addressing the source of spores, such as bathroom condensation, leaking taps or pipes, clogged drains, damp fabrics, etc. This will help you achieve desired results with precision, especially when preparing your property for the final rental inspection in Sydney, NSW.

In today's guide, we'll uncover some of the best, natural and effective mould removal products that are super easy to make at home. Instead of using perilous store bought cleaners, explore hidden gems from your kitchen pantry and bathroom cabinets to create a healthy and hygienic home.

1. White Vinegar Spray: The Most Effective DIY Solution

It is said that white vinegar can banish 82 per cent of mould and mildew species if used correctly. That's one of the reasons why professionals use it during a budget end of lease cleaning Sydney. You can prepare an effective and affordable vinegar solution at home. Here is a quick recipe:

- Pour equal parts of white vinegar and warm water into a spray bottle
- Add a few drops of dish soap liquid detergent
- Mix it well

Directions to Use:

- Spray the solution on mouldy areas like walls, curtains, glass doors curtains.
- Leave it for a few minutes. The acidic properties of vinegar can break down the spores effectively.
- For hard surfaces, scrub with a soft bristled brush. Gently work in circular motion.
- For soft surfaces like carpets, blot the area with a microfiber cloth.
- Rinse or blot with a clean cloth and let the surface dry to prevent re growth.

Note: Never use vinegar or any other acidic cleaner on natural stone surfaces (marble, granite, soapstone, travertine, limestone, etc.). They can wreak havoc on the surface, leading to costly repairs.

2. Hydrogen Peroxide: A Potent Mould Fighting Solution

Offering strong oxidising properties, hydrogen peroxide is one of the most effective natural cleaning products for tackling mould spores. It works effectively against a range of mould species. The best part is that you can use it on tiles, curtains and natural stone surfaces without worrying about any damage or deterioration.

Dilute one part of 3 % hydrogen peroxide to three parts of warm water and spray it on the affected area, and leave it for 10-20 minutes. Ensure proper ventilation to keep pungent smell at bay. Next, gently scrub with an old toothbrush or a sponge. Wash and wipe it dry.

Note: When applying hydrogen peroxide on porous surfaces like wood, ensure you sand and remove adhesive stains to prevent damage.

3. Tea Tree Oil: An Antifungal Essential Oil

Tea tree oil is another great natural solution for removing mould and mildew stains. It is an antifungal and antiseptic essential oil made up of terpinene 4 Ol. Professional end of lease cleaners Sydney recommend diluting the oil with water to make it more effective. Take 15 drops of tea tree oil with 1 cup of warm water. Mix it well and spray directly onto mould laden surfaces like ceiling walls, tiles, carpets, floors, etc. Allow it to sit for an hour until you wipe it clean with a cloth. You can also use other essential oils to banish sulphur like smell from your house.

Note: Don't rinse until required.

4. Baking Soda: A Natural Deodoriser and Mould Remover

Unfortunately, mould and mildew spores leave a musty smell, even after removing the visible stain. If it is musty or earthy after using vinegar or other products, apply baking soda paste. This will banish unpleasant odour naturally.

Apply this mildly alkaline solution with a brush or sponge and gently scrub the area. Ensure you rinse it with clean water to prevent white residue. It is best to use it after cleaning the surface with vinegar.

Tip: Ensure you regularly steam cleaning your household surfaces like carpets, rugs and upholstery area to keep germs at bay.

5. Borax: Kill Mould Spores From Non Porous Surfaces

Believe it or not! Borax is a natural cleaning agent, super effective for banishing mould and mildew from metal, laminate countertops, sealed countertops, glass and other non porous surfaces. With its antifungal and insecticidal properties, you can maintain a healthy and hygienic indoor environment with ease.

To prepare the solution, mix one cup of borax with one gallon of warm water. Dilute it properly and spray it on the affected area. Leave it for a few minutes before scrubbing. Rinse and dry the area completely to prevent further mould infestation.

Wrapping up

These are some of the most effective, natural, and affordable mould removal solutions that can help you create a healthy home environment. Use white vinegar, hydrogen peroxide, tea tree oil, baking soda, and borax with caution to banish the nasty spores and the lingering smell without releasing toxic fumes indoors.

Protecting Against Pests: Sealing the Entry Points



Many people contact the City of Sydney about pest issues such as rats, mice, pigeons and bees.

We don't offer pest control services on private property, however, we do have a baiting and monitoring program to control rodent activity on public spaces.

Pest concerns on private land are the responsibility of the landowner and a licensed pest controller should be contacted.

If the community's health and safety is at risk due to pests on private property, we can investigate.

When necessary we can take action on the owner or occupier of the property.

What you need to do

Rats and mice

Rats and mice in the public space

Our pest control program includes the use of poison bait stations and solar-powered SMART rodent control boxes. These pest control devices are located throughout the city to manage rodent populations.

If you notice activity on public or neighbouring properties, contact us and we will investigate.

Rats and mice on private land

Where rats are found to be nesting on private land, the landowner is responsible for taking action. This may include engaging the services of a licensed pest controller.

Our compliance officers can take action on private land which is unsafe or unhealthy and when conditions such as the presence of garbage or other materials promote rat activity.

Managing rat and mice activity

Rats are attracted to poor waste management to feed and nest.

- Make sure your property does not attract rats by keeping pet food inside and your land clean and in good condition at all times.
- Ensure all waste in public spaces is contained within rubbish bins report illegal dumping to us.
- Pest proofing your property using solid durable materials and screens to keep rodents and other pests out.
- Speak to your licensed pest controller about pest proofing your home or business to prevent unwanted entry into your property.

Bee control

Bees exist naturally throughout the city and generally do not sting if left alone. We will respond to swarms and nests that occur on public land to protect public health.

- You can report swarming bees on public land by contacting us on 02 9265 9333.
- Swarms that occur on private land are the responsibility of the landowner to remove through the services of a licensed pest controller.
- For contact details of a registered beekeeper who may be able to safely collect and rehome the bees, see the Swarm Collectors webpage.

Pigeons, ibis and other wild birds

We don't offer pest control measures involving pigeons. Owners of property impacted by nesting or roosting pigeons are advised to seek the services of a licensed pest controller.

The Australian white ibis is protected under law. Our ability to intervene is limited with ibis but when necessary, we will investigate complaints in relation to nesting colonies on public land.

We don't investigate complaints or initiate control measures with wild birds such as cockatoos, Indian mynas, or seagulls.

For all other queries regarding pests in the local area, please contact us.

Roof to Foundation: Seasonal Maintenance Essentials



Keeping a home in top condition goes far beyond simple tidying. It's about proactive planning, consistent upkeep, and smart budgeting all of which help avoid expensive repairs and ensure a healthy, comfortable living environment. From cleaning gutters in spring to insulating pipes in winter, a well-structured maintenance routine can save you time, money, and stress. In this guide, we'll explore why seasonal maintenance matters, what tools and preparations you need, and how to tackle specific tasks throughout the year. By following these best practices, you'll protect your home's value, reduce utility bills, and create a safer space for everyone who lives there

Why Seasonal Maintenance Matters

Seasonal maintenance can sometimes feel like an overwhelming list of chores, but the benefits make it well worth the effort:

- **Prevent Major Damage**
Catching minor issues early—like a small roof leak or clogged gutter—can prevent them from escalating into significant (and costly) problems.
- **Extend Lifespan of Systems**
Heating, ventilation, air conditioning, plumbing, and other systems all function longer and more efficiently when properly maintained.

- **Improve Energy Efficiency**

Tasks such as sealing air leaks and insulating attics directly reduce heating and cooling costs while keeping indoor temperatures more stable.

- **Maintain Property Value**

A well-kept home is more appealing to potential buyers or renters and can command a higher price on the market.

- **Enhance Health and Safety**

Regular upkeep helps eliminate mold, pests, and allergens, creating a healthier indoor environment. It also reduces the risk of accidents from slippery walkways or faulty wiring.

By committing to a proactive routine, you'll spread out tasks and expenses across the year rather than facing a huge repair bill all at once. This gives you greater peace of mind and keeps both your property and budget in good shape.

General Preparation and Tools

Before diving into each season's to-dos, ensure you have the right supplies. Having a well-stocked tool kit and a simple plan makes everything easier:

1. Basic Hand Tools

- Screwdrivers (both flathead and Phillips)
- Hammers, pliers, adjustable wrenches
- Utility knives and measuring tape
- Assorted nails, screws, and anchors

2. Gardening Equipment

- Rake, shovel, garden fork, pruning shears
- Lawn mower or access to a lawn-care service
- Wheelbarrow for larger yard tasks
- Hose and sprinklers or drip irrigation parts

3. Cleaning Supplies

- Buckets, brooms, mops, microfiber cloths
- Eco-friendly detergents, vinegar, baking soda
- A vacuum cleaner with attachments for upholstery and crevices
- Gloves, masks, and protective eyewear

4. Exterior Maintenance Tools

- Leaf blower or power washer (if applicable)
- Ladders (step and extension) with proper safety features
- Caulking gun, paint brushes, paint scraper
- Sealants, touch-up paint, wood stain or varnish

5. HVAC Essentials

- Extra air filters for your heating/cooling system
- Thermometer or humidity monitor
- Space heater or fan (if needed for smaller rooms)

6. Protective Gear

- Work gloves for yard and home repairs
- Safety goggles when handling power tools or chemicals
- Sturdy, slip-resistant shoes
- A respirator or dust mask for painting or heavy dust

Also consider setting up a digital calendar or reminder app. Assign each task to a specific month or season so you never lose track. Spreading out maintenance tasks over the year helps prevent burnout and ensures everything gets done consistently.

Spring Maintenance

Spring ushers in warmer weather, blooming gardens, and the chance to tackle any damage left behind by winter. Embrace the season as an opportunity to refresh both your indoor and outdoor spaces.

1. Inspect Roof and Gutters

- Look for loose or missing shingles, cracked tiles, or sagging spots.
- Clear leaves, twigs, and debris from gutters and downspouts to ensure water drains away from the foundation.
- Consider installing gutter guards if you have recurring issues with clogs.

2. Refresh the Home Exterior

- Power wash siding, driveways, and walkways to remove mold, algae, and stubborn grime.
- Examine exterior paint for chips or peeling; touch up affected areas to protect underlying materials from moisture.
- Inspect window frames for signs of rot or cracks, and reseal them if necessary.

3. Improve Indoor Air Quality

- Replace or clean HVAC filters that may be clogged with dust from winter heating.
- Open windows on mild days to ventilate stale indoor air.
- Dust ceiling fans, blinds, baseboards, and other neglected surfaces to reduce allergens.

4. Garden and Lawn Care

- Rake away any lingering debris, then aerate your lawn to improve soil health and drainage.
- Add compost or fertilizer to feed new grass and plant growth.
- Prune dead or damaged branches from trees and shrubs. If you plan to plant annuals or a vegetable garden, spring is the perfect time to get started.

5. Check Outdoor Lighting and Faucets

- Test motion sensor lights and replace burned-out bulbs around doors and walkways.
- Inspect outdoor faucets and hoses for leaks or damage from freezing temperatures; repair or replace as needed.

Completing these tasks in spring sets a strong foundation for the rest of the year. You'll also spot any potential issues that may need a closer look before summer heat intensifies.

Summer Maintenance

With its bright sunshine, summer is a prime season to enjoy outdoor living spaces. However, it can also strain cooling systems, create water-use challenges, and invite pests. Focus on keeping your home cool, comfortable, and pest-free.

1. Optimize Cooling and Ventilation

- Schedule an HVAC tune-up to ensure your system runs efficiently.
- Keep vents unblocked by furniture or curtains, and consider installing ceiling fans or portable fans to circulate air.
- Check attic ventilation proper airflow helps regulate indoor temperatures and prevents moisture buildup.

2. Conserve Water and Care for Landscaping

- Water lawns and gardens early in the morning or late in the evening to reduce evaporation.
- Use mulch around plants to retain moisture and limit weed growth.
- Inspect irrigation systems or sprinklers for leaks and clogs; make sure water is directed where it's needed.

3. Manage Pests and Insects

- Eliminate standing water in birdbaths, planters, or gutters to deter mosquitoes.
- Repair damaged window screens and seal gaps around doors to keep out flies and other bugs.
- Maintain a clean yard remove piles of wood or leaves that can shelter mice, spiders, or snakes.

4. Outdoor Entertainment Areas

- Clean and inspect decks or patios for loose boards, nails, or cracks.
- Re-stain or seal wood to protect it from sun and rain.
- Check patio furniture for damage; wash cushions and store them in a dry spot when not in use.

5. Fire Safety and Security

- Test outdoor lighting and replace bulbs to discourage burglars.
- Keep a fire extinguisher on hand if you grill frequently; clean grease traps to prevent flare-ups.
- Lock doors and windows if you travel, and consider setting lights on timers to make the home look occupied.

Summer upkeep focuses on energy efficiency, water conservation, and proper ventilation. Balancing these factors helps you enjoy warm weather while avoiding inflated cooling bills and pest infestations.

Air, Dust, and Allergens: Maintaining a Healthy Indoor Environment



Australians spend most of our time indoors. The air quality within these spaces affects our health. Learn about how you can improve indoor air quality.

Indoor air quality

Indoor air quality is affected by many things, including:

outside air pollution coming inside, such as emissions from vehicles and industry and smoke from bushfires and wood heaters

- particulate matter from sources in the home, such as wood heaters
- volatile organic compounds, such as formaldehyde, emitted from building materials and furnishings

- microorganisms like viruses, bacteria and fungi (including moulds) which can be transmitted through the air
- gases like carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide from sources such as gas heaters, cooktops and stoves
- tobacco smoke and vape aerosols
- dust, dust mites and pollen
- asbestos
- lead
- pollutants from domestic pets, such as pet dander.

Indoor air can have much higher concentrations of some pollutants and different health risks than outdoor air.

Health impacts of poor indoor air quality

Health impacts from air pollution in indoor environments include:

- carbon monoxide poisoning from using wood or gas heaters without enough ventilation
- transmission of infectious diseases like influenza, RSV and COVID-19 by airborne viruses
- respiratory and cardiovascular impacts from particulate matter
- asthma from dust mite allergens.

High levels of carbon dioxide and particulate matter pollution can affect educational results in school classrooms and reduce workplace productivity.

Ways to improve indoor air quality

There are simple ways to improve indoor air quality and reduce health problems. You can:

- not smoke or vape
- increase outside air flow by opening windows (if the outside air is clean)
- wear a P2 or N95 respirator mask to reduce the spread of airborne viruses
- use high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters suitable for the size of the indoor space
- when cooking, use a high-efficiency exhaust fan vented outside to remove emissions and cooking odours
- use an exhaust fan to remove steam and moist air
- keep exhaust fans clean from dirt and grease
- avoid generating moisture indoors (for example, using a clothes dryer without sufficient ventilation) or having damp surfaces that encourage microbiological growth
- manage moisture in buildings, in both the internal environment and in the fabric of the building itself

- use a door mat to help keep outdoor dust out
- remove indoor dust regularly, and clean air conditioner filters regularly
- ensure any mechanical ventilation systems are well-maintained, and have a high-grade filter, to bring clean outside air indoors
- where possible, choose an alternative method than a wood heater to heat your home
- avoid cleaning products, air fresheners, scents and sprays, cosmetics, glues, paint, varnishes, carpet and fibreboard with high volatile organic compound content
- avoid running a vehicle engine in a garage attached to a dwelling
- avoid using charcoal bead cookers, barbecues, camping stoves or outdoor heaters indoors
- keep your pets and their bedding clean.

Make sure you have sufficient ventilation, even when sealing draughts to save money on heating and cooling costs.

What to do if the outside air is polluted

Keep inside air as clean as possible from outdoor air pollutants such as smoke, vehicle fumes and industrial pollution. You can:

- close windows and doors during short episodes of outside air pollution and open them when air quality improves
- use a reverse cycle air conditioner or set other types of air conditioners to recirculate indoor air during short episodes of outside air pollution
- avoid using evaporative coolers during short episodes of outside air pollution, as they bring outside air inside
- during lengthy periods of outside air pollution, air out indoor spaces when the outside air quality improves even temporarily
- use a suitable HEPA filter to reduce airborne viruses and some other indoor air pollutants
- wear a P2 or N95 respirator mask.

If you or anyone in your care has trouble breathing, chest pain or discomfort call 000 for an ambulance.

People who are sensitive to smoke should actively monitor symptoms and follow their health management plan recommended by their doctor.

When to DIY and When to Call the Pros



One big question you'll probably ask yourself as you prepare for a renovation is when to DIY, and when to hire a home remodel professional. There are tradeoffs in time, money, and results, so it's often a matter of budget and personal confidence.

There are seemingly endless resources available to help do it yourself, such as books with step-by-step instructions and online how-to videos. The general rule is to undertake projects you feel comfortable with and have the skill set to complete with good results. Most people are handy with a paintbrush and can save some bucks handling cosmetic improvements themselves. Others are willing to expand their repertoire to install tile, replace countertops, or even build a deck.

"Sweat equity is a way to save a bit of money upfront," says Christina Hoffmann, content manager for HouseLogic.com. "Seasonal home maintenance is one area you can DIY on your own, and those savings add up. You can do your own landscaping, paint fences, replace filters, clean gutters, and other maintenance you do on a regular basis."

Homeowners should avoid DIY jobs that, if performed incorrectly, could have truly disastrous results, like a plumbing leak inside a wall that causes water damage, or poor electric work that repeatedly blows circuits or causes a fire.

"There are a few things you mostly want to avoid, which are plumbing, heating, and electrical work," advises Louis M. Weiher, CR, CCP, president, owner, and general manager of Carmel Builders, Inc., in Menomonee Falls, Wis. "Other than that, you

can pretty much learn to do anything else on your own. You just have to have the time, and I mean a lot of time, to learn. You have to be prepared to waste a lot of material learning and know it'll take more time than you thought. Plan on five times longer."

The keys to success are actually enjoying DIY...and a willingness to learn from the pros.

"If you like DIY and have the time, go for it," Weiher says. "What we do—these are not skills that people can't learn, but they can't be learned overnight and can't be learned by watching YouTube."

Part of the DIY decision centers on homeowners' expectations for the finished project. Pros who work on homes every day know the tricks and techniques to get high-quality results. For example, even first-time DIYers can lay tile, but floors and walls are never perfectly flat. They always have bumps or imperfections. A pro knows how to fix that, whereas a DIYer might struggle with it, which could affect the installation and how the tile looks in the end.

Conclusion

Maintaining a home is not just about fixing what is broken but about preventing problems before they start. By staying attentive to small changes around your property and performing routine maintenance you can avoid costly repairs protect your investment and create a safer healthier living environment. From managing moisture and mould to keeping pests away and knowing when to seek professional help the steps outlined in this guide offer a clear path to responsible home care. Consistent attention to your home will not only extend its life but also give you peace of mind knowing you are prepared for whatever challenges may arise.

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