Why Ventilate?

Why do I need to use ventilation fans?

The goal of ventilation is to make the air you breathe healthier by removing polluted air from your home. Your home has fans installed to remove stale air and bring in a controlled amount of outdoor air.

Indoor air can be polluted. Here are common sources of pollutants in many homes.

Products we use in our homes give off odors and chemicals.

We store and use things that can pollute the air we breathe indoors:

- cleaning products and cosmetics
- pesticides and garden chemicals
- building materials and home furnishings — like carpeting, flooring, cabinets, paints, and finishes

People and pets add pollution.

- moisture from cooking, bathing, and breathing
- germs that cause illnesses
- people and pet smells
- cigarette smoke
- pet dander
- what we track into our homes on the bottom of our shoes

Moisture can cause big problems.

Moisture is a natural part of life, but too much moisture in a home is bad for both the people and the building.

- Dampness in homes can make asthma problems worse.
- More dust mites grow when moisture levels are high. Many people with allergies have problems with dust mites.
- Moisture can cause molds to grow in and on walls and ceilings, hurting health and damaging buildings.
- High levels of moisture in a home can lead to rotting wood and insect damage in walls and attics.

Ways to keep pollutants out of your home.

Your choices affect the quality of air in your home:

- Avoid harsh cleaners. Look for green cleaning products instead.
- Look for "fragrance free" cleaning products and cosmetics.
- Store paints, pesticides, and garden chemicals in a stand-alone garage or shed, instead of indoors or in an attached garage. Find less toxic choices when you can.
- Encourage smokers to smoke outside.
- When you remodel or upgrade your home, choose building materials and furniture that are labeled "low-emission" or "green" or "low VOC" when possible.
- Don't use candles, incense, or air fresheners to mask odors. Instead, remove the source of the odor.

Does my home have a problem?

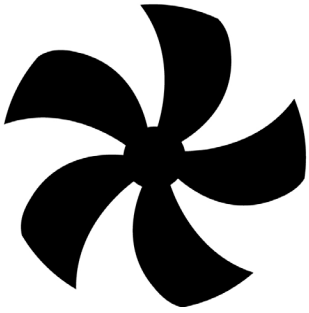
Look for these signs of poor air quality in your home:

- Odors that linger from cooking, hobbies, or pets
- Damp, musty smells
- Mold growing on windows, walls, floors or ceilings
- Moisture dripping from the toilet tank
- Moisture on windows or window frames
- Household member with asthma problems
- Many people living in a small home or apartment

If you see these signs of poor air quality in your home, using your ventilation fans more often and for longer times may help.

Using your ventilation equipment

Your home has two kinds of ventilation equipment installed to remove stale, inside air. Using ventilation fans can make the air in your home healthier to breathe and reduce building maintenance problems.



1. Ventilation in the background

Your home has ventilation equipment installed to replace a preset amount of stale, polluted air automatically. Ask your contractor or landlord to show you how your ventilation system works. This system is designed to work quietly in the background to protect the quality of the air you breathe. For the best indoor air quality, leave this fan switched on to operate automatically as your contractor scheduled it.

2. Fans that remove pollution at the source

Your home also has fans installed to remove moisture, odors, and other pollutants at the source. Using them regularly can help the air quality in your home.

In the kitchen

Turn on the fan over your stove whenever you cook.

In the bathroom

Turn on the fan in the bathroom when you shower or take a bath. Leave it on for at least 20 minutes after bathing to get rid of moisture.

When you smell an odor

Turn on the fan nearest the odor. Leave it on until the odor is gone.

Warning: For homes with equipment that burns oil, natural gas, propane, or wood…

Using ventilation equipment like a bath fan or kitchen range hood usually improves the air quality inside a home. But if you have a gas oven, gas range, fireplace, woodstove, gas water heater, gas furnace, or other equipment that burns a fuel, testing should be done by a trained professional before and after exhaust fans are installed to avoid problems with combustion gases.

Also, be sure you have a working smoke alarm and a carbon monoxide detector (installed at the height that the manufacturer recommends) to alert you to dangerous gases in your home. Test your detectors often, and change their batteries regularly.