

What You Need to Know to Stop Your Air Conditioner from Losing Its Cool

No matter how energy-efficient your air conditioner was when it was installed, it can lose efficiency if not properly maintained. The good news is, it isn't hard, time-consuming or expensive to do the kind of upkeep that can help your unit last for years:

- Change your air filters regularly. A clogged or improperly installed air filter makes your system work harder. So, if you forget to change your filters, you might notice you're paying more for air conditioning that you're not enjoying nearly as much.
- Be sure not to block your floor, wall or ceiling vents. When drapes, furniture, toys or anything else blocks the vents, it will restrict the airflow—and decrease the system's efficiency and life span.
- Check your outside condensing unit periodically to make sure it isn't covered up or clogged with leaves or debris. Give it space—at least a foot—by cutting back shrubs or tall grass. Air needs to flow in through the sides to cool the coil.
- Check the drain system to make sure it isn't clogged. Because your air conditioner removes humidity from your home during the cooling season, you should notice water trickling from the condensate drain of the indoor unit. Keep in mind that the drainage will be limited if you live in a very dry environment.
- Don't try to turn your home into an icebox. You shouldn't run your system in cooling mode when outdoor temperatures are lower than 55°F/12.78°C unless your outdoor unit is modified to handle cooling in colder weather.
- Have a Service Expert clean your indoor coil and replace your filters routinely. If you notice longer operating cycles and reduced energy efficiency, the coil could be to blame.
- Check for water in the base of your outdoor unit. It likely means the support base has settled or shifted since installation and is no longer level. If that's the case, be sure to re-level it to assure proper drainage. Also check for standing water or ice under the unit in and arrange for it to drain away.
- Consider having your ducts sealed or insulated. Air leaks can lead to wasted energy and an overworked air conditioner.

Think of it this way: By investing a little time and money in keeping your unit operating at peak performance, you stand to save a lot in system repair and energy bills. Of course, if you're not up to the task, your local Service Expert can take care of all the above, and much more.

During an air conditioner service call, your Service Expert will typically:

- Check your system's operation to determine its condition and if repairs or adjustments are needed.
- Check refrigerant charge levels and air flow.
- Make sure all electrical connections are sound and components are working properly.
- Check for secure physical connections of individual parts.
- Check and clean the indoor and outdoor coils.
- Check and clean the condensate drainage system.
- Clean and adjust blower components.
- Check the filters, and replace or clean them, if needed.

Humidifier Maintenance

Your humidifier is designed to keep the ideal amount of humidity in the air. You don't need to sweat annual maintenance for your humidifier too much. Just be sure to change the water panel before the heating season.

If you have a water-saver humidifier, you'll need two water panels per heating season: One at the beginning and one about half-way through.

Ventilator Maintenance

Your ventilator is designed to remove stale and polluted air from your home, while keeping valuable energy from escaping. We've included some tips here to keep it running at its best. But, of course, you can always have your HVAC Professional maintain your ventilation system for you.

- Lubricating the bearings is not recommended. The motors are factory lubricated.
- Core maintenance: First, it's very important to know which type of unit you have, because core cleaning varies by type and you could cause damage with improper cleaning. The serial number will include either the letters ERV or HRV to tell you what you have. For Energy Recovery Ventilator (ERV) cores, vacuum every 3 months to remove dust that would inhibit the energy transfer. Do not use water. The core should only be serviced when the outdoor temperature is between 60°F (16°C) and 75°F (24°C) and dry. NOTE: If the edges of the core are soft, do not try to service the core. The air passages can be damaged and/or closed off by handling it or trying to remove it. For Heat Recovery Ventilator (HRV) cores, wash once a year. And handle with care. First, soak the core for 3 hours in a bath of warm water and mild soap. Then rinse under warm, not hot, water. Hot water and strong detergents can damage a heat recovery core.
- A dirty air filter will cause excessive strain on the blower motor. The filters in your ventilator are washable and should be cleaned every 3 months. Use a vacuum cleaner to remove the heaviest portion of accumulated dust, then wash in warm water. NOTE: Do NOT clean these filters in a dishwasher or dry them with heating appliances. This will cause permanent damage. Use lukewarm water to clean filters. Replace filters only when they are completely dry.
- Regularly check the screen on the exterior intake hood and clean as necessary.