

DIY Fall Gas Furnace Maintenance Tips

Giving your HVAC system a tune-up could save you money this winter

Heating and cooling your home accounts for about [48% of your energy usage](#). Spiralling energy costs have many home and condo owners working to reduce their hydro bills. Properly maintaining your furnace and ductwork can reduce energy consumption, extend the life of your appliances and reduce your carbon footprint.

Maintaining Ductwork

In the average home, at least [20-30% of your heated air](#) is lost through leaking ductwork. Hidden ducting is difficult to reach, so focus on areas where ducts are accessible.

If you have one, use a [duct leakage tester](#) to ascertain how much conditioned air you are losing or do a visual test to find gaps and holes.

Clean the ductwork around the affected area and wait until it's dried. Wrap the leak with foil tape and press down for a good seal. You can also use caulk to seal holes, but turn off the HVAC system and allow the ducting to cool before caulking. Another way to cover holes is to paint mastic over the gaps with a paint brush until it is as thick as a coin. Get a step-by-step guide [here](#).

Furnace Maintenance

Before you begin your maintenance, turn off the electricity and the fuel supply for safety. The fuel shut-off valve is located on the gas line. Allow the furnace to cool.

Remove the combustion chamber door and burner cover by unscrewing them and setting them aside. When soot builds up on the walls of the combustion chamber, it can cause damage. Use a small wire brush to scrape off the soot and then vacuum up any soot, dust and other debris.

Open the blower door and then use your vacuum to remove any dust from the blower compartment. Use a soft cloth to wipe down the blower blades gently.

Locate the sensor and use an emery cloth to remove any residue.

Older furnaces will need oiling of the motor and blower-shaft bearings. You can do this by removing the oil caps and applying two drops of lightweight machine oil to the bearings and motor. Take care not to over lubricate. Be sure to replace the caps.

Take off the air handler cover and inspect the blower belt for cracks or stretching. It shouldn't move more than $\frac{3}{4}$ inches when you press it. If stretching has occurred or there are visible signs of deterioration, the belt will need to be replaced.

Inspect the outside flue to ensure it is clear and in good working order. Check the indoor vents and move any furniture or other items that are blocking them.

Change your filters once a month or according to manufacturer's instructions. You can save [5-15%](#) on your energy bill by regularly changing your air filters. Get a guide to changing your air filters [here](#).

If you are unsure or uncomfortable with any of these steps, it's best to call a professional in. Get a more detailed step-by-step guide with photos [here](#).

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