

Dim Your Lights and Save on Your Hydro Bills

Reduce your hydro bill and save up to 75% on lighting with these easy changes.

Some home and condo owners have the mistaken idea that lighting doesn't cost that much, but it actually accounts for about [16% of your hydro bill](#) in the summer and more in the dark winter months. There are many creative ways to curtail the lighting portion of your hydro bill which reduces greenhouse gas emissions and saves you money.

Dimmers

Installing and using dimmer switches will help to reduce your energy consumption. If you are going to replace your switches, take this opportunity to install foam gaskets behind the switch plate cover on those switches that are uninsulated. Check to see if your switches are insulated by placing your hand over the switches on a cold day, if you can feel a slight draft, specifically on the switches mounted on exterior walls, your switches need insulating. Uninsulated switches are basically holes in your wall through which heated indoor air is escaping.

Occupancy Sensors

For those who just can't remember to turn off the lights, occupancy sensors will do this job for you. These sensors have advantages for security, energy efficiency and convenience. Occupancy sensors can be motion-activated or thermal. If you can, opt for the thermal (infrared) sensors so the lights don't switch off when you stop moving.

Light Savers

Place lamps in a corner if your walls are a light colour so the light can be reflected back into the room. Keep your lightbulbs dusted for maximum efficiency.

While these do require an initial investment, you can save up to [75% of your lighting bill](#) by switching to LEDs or CFLs. The newer versions come in warmer hues than their cold, blue predecessors so you can rest assured that you be comfortable.

CFLs or LEDs

Once you decide to make the switch to energy-efficient lighting, you have to navigate a plethora of choices to find a bulb that suits your needs. Let's start by distinguishing between the two major types of lights:

CFLs: Compact fluorescents are more efficient than incandescent lights and will last much longer too. Their biggest downside is the presence of mercury which means that a broken or spent CFL must be handled as hazardous waste and disposed of in an appropriate drop-off center. Should one break in your home, be sure to clean up carefully using protective gear so that you and your family are not exposed to the

mercury.

CFLs work by sending an electric current through a glass tube which contains mercury vapor and argon. Consequently, it can take a few seconds for the light to come on once you flick the switch; just long enough for you to stub your toe!

You can't use dimmer switches with most CFLs.

LEDs: 'Light emitting diodes' or LEDs have longevity on their side and last from 20,000 to 50,000 hours—about five times longer than comparable bulbs.

LEDs don't contain mercury so they can be disposed of with your residential garbage, but they do cost more than CFLs. LEDs use much less power (watts) per unit of light generated (lumens) than CFLs which means they cost you less to operate.

If you can't afford a complete revamp, consider changing just the five most used lights in your home to energy-efficient LEDs which will result in savings of about [\\$70 a year](#).

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