



10 Simple and Preventative Home Maintenance Tips

With the passing of each season, your home goes through changes in temperature, weather condition, aging and of course, human abuse. In order to keep the components of your home running smoothly and avoid costly repairs later, it's helpful to conduct these seasonal maintenance actions:

1. ROOF, GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS

Your roof is often forgotten about because it is not at eye level to give you a subtle reminder every time you walk past it. Examine your roof/gutters/downspouts for debris. Clear leaves, dirt, and sticks from gutters and examine downspouts for damage or loose pieces.

Check the flashing around your chimney and any openings in the roof, such as skylights, for leaking problems. Look for damaged, loose or missing shingles that may leak during rough winter weather.

2. YARD IRRIGATION AND LAWN

Fix broken sprinkler heads. If you want to prevent spring weeds and winter lawn damage, don't forget to fertilize. Visit your local garden center to find out information on what type of fertilizer to use and when to spread it.

3. WINDOWS, DOORS, AIR DUCTS AND ATTIC

Check air ducts in the attic for holes and patch with duct tape or replace with new ones. Go through your home and open windows to ensure the seal and caulking around the window frame is in good condition. If the gaps between siding and window or door frames are bigger than the width of a nickel, you need to reapply exterior caulk. Silicone caulk is best for exterior use because it won't shrink and it's impervious to the elements.

4. SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Ensure that all smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers are in good working order. Replace batteries in appropriate devices at least twice each year.

5. FAUCETS

Check for leaky faucets in the kitchen and bathrooms. Replace washers as necessary.

6. REFRIGERATOR

Make sure your refrigerator door seals are airtight. Test them by closing the door over a dollar bill. If you can pull the bill out easily, the latch may need to be adjusted or the seal may need to be replaced.

Clean refrigerator coils once or twice a year. Check beneath the kick plate or behind the fridge for the coils, which tend to attract scum buildups that can hinder performance. A handheld vacuum can clean it up quickly. Be sure to change your refrigerator water filter. Filters that don't efficiently remove contaminants and impurities may expose you to harmful water.

7. FIREPLACE

Make sure your fireplace (or any heating appliance burning gas, oil, wood or coal), chimney and vents are clean and in good repair. Check chimneys for obstructions such as a bird nests. DIY or call a chimney sweep to clean the fireplace of ashes. In the fall season, check the chimney for loose or missing mortar. Make sure the damper closes tightly.

8. EXTERIOR WALLS

Look for possible weather-related damage, like cracks and loose or crumbling mortar. Wood trim and siding can suffer from deteriorating paint or become loose. Windowsills may be cracked, split or decayed.

9. HEATING, COOLING, AND SYSTEM FILTERS

Remember to clean or replace filters once a month, or as needed. Check and clean the dryer vent, air conditioner, stove hood and room fans. Keep heating and cooling vents clean and free from furniture and draperies.

10. HOT WATER HEATER

If you live in an area with hard water, extra amounts of sediments could be building up in your tank. The beginning of the fall season is a perfect time to drain and make sure rust is not developing in your tank as well. If your hot water heater is extremely old or is rusting, consider investing in a new one that will be more cost-effective and energy-efficient.