

# SCALISH



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## HOW TO IMPROVE INDOOR AIR QUALITY IN ALL FOUR SEASONS

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Northeast Ohio is a great place to live, and part of what makes it great is that we get to enjoy four distinct seasons; spring, summer, fall and winter.

The different temperature and weather conditions of each season impact not only how we live and spend our time, but our indoor air quality.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), indoor air quality refers to the air quality within buildings and structures as it relates to the health and comfort of its occupants. Short-term effects of poor indoor air quality can include irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat, headaches, dizziness, and fatigue. Long-term effects may show up months or even years later and can include respiratory diseases, heart disease, and cancer.

The main causes of poor indoor air quality are pollution sources that release gases or particles into the air, and inadequate ventilation, which does not provide sufficient fresh air to displace and remove pollutants that build up inside the home.

This guide was created to help you improve your indoor air quality by illustrating the factors which impact it in all four seasons.



Spring means relying less on your furnace, opening windows to get much needed fresh air, and hopefully, spring cleaning – which can greatly improve your indoor air quality as the temperature warms.

Here are more ways to improve your indoor air quality in spring:

## CLEAN GREEN.



That fresh pine or citrus scent that makes us think “clean” is probably masking petroleum-based chemicals in your cleaners. Opting to use fragrance-free or unscented products will help prevent you from polluting your air with chemicals.

## GET STEAMED.



Using the cleaning power of steam reduces reliance on harsh chemicals. Vacuuming and steam cleaning pillows, drapes, rugs and carpets will remove dust, bacteria, mold, and allergens from your home.

## GET HEPA.



Vacuums equipped with a HEPA filter can remove up to 99.7% of allergens from carpets or rugs and are the most effective cleaning devices to improve indoor air quality.

## SHOW YOUR DUCTS SOME LOVE.



Airborne allergens are drawn into your HVAC system throughout the year and settle in your air ducts. When the system is turned on, those allergens and other contaminants are pushed into your living space, where you and your family breathe them in. Having a professional air duct cleaning can greatly improve the quality of your indoor air and should be done every 5 years.

## FILTERS, FILTERS, FILTERS.



Spring is a great time to service your HVAC system if it needs a tune-up. It's also a good time to replace your filter before cooling season kicks in. To improve the quality of your air year-round, you should change your filter every 90 days – every 30 days if your system gets heavy use.

## PLANTS!



Having plants in your home naturally removes toxins from the air. According to a NASA clean air study, you can achieve noticeable air purification by placing plants every 100 square feet. (source: *Interior Landscape Plants for Indoor Air Pollution Abatement*, 1989)

In addition, make sure your dryer lint screen and bathroom exhaust fan grills are cleaned every spring.





Summer means warmer temperatures, which is great for spending time outdoors, but indoor air pollution tends to be at its worst during the summer months.

Warm summer air tends not to move as much as in other seasons, and the days are longer with stronger sunlight, which means more ultraviolet radiation. What's more, air conditioning use can cause pollutant gas emissions to increase substantially in the summer (source: *Environmental Science & Technology*, 2017)

Here are a couple of the easiest, most effective ways to improve your home's air quality during the summer:

### OPEN YOUR WINDOWS.



In order to keep pollutants from building up in your home, open your windows to introduce fresh air into your ventilation system. Your HVAC system re-circulates the same air through your home repeatedly, so opening a window on a breezy day will let fresh air circulate through your vent system. Your vent filters will catch any pollutants as the new fresh air cycles through it, so on a windy summer day, turn off your AC for a few hours and open up some windows.

### USE A DEHUMIDIFIER.



Overly dry or overly moist air is poor air. When it gets warm outside, humidity encourages mold and mildew growth and dust accumulation. The most humid areas of most homes are the basement, attic, crawlspace, and closets. Summer is the time to check these areas of your home for signs of humidity like condensation, mold growth, dust accumulation, and wet air. Running a dehumidifier for even a few hours every day can dry out an area quickly and improve your air quality.

## TUNE UP YOUR AC.



Summer is the time to have your AC professionally serviced to improve your indoor air quality. Having your condenser coil and inner compartments cleaned safely removes dust, allergens, and other air pollutants. An AC pro will dust the fans and change the filters, ensuring air moves through your vents effectively, as well as making sure your filters are clean to catch pollutants effectively.

## CLEAN YOUR VENTS.



When your vents are dirty, the air moving through them is dirty too. Clean vents mean clean air.

## KEEP IT CLEAN.



Pets tend to shed a lot during the summer so you can have a lot of pet hair in and around your home, which can affect your indoor air quality and trigger allergies. Dust mites are also common in summer and can aggravate your allergies. Regular dusting and sweeping, and grooming your pets and brushing them daily, will keep the air clean and minimize pollutants to improve your indoor air quality.



When fall's cooler temperatures arrive, people start spending more time indoors. It's a good time to ensure that your indoor air quality is as good as possible.

Some of these tactics will sound familiar, because they make sense in every season. Maintaining your indoor air quality is important in spring, summer, fall and winter.

### OPEN YOUR WINDOWS.



Keeping your windows closed during fall keeps chilly air from entering your home, but closed windows can lead to elevated CO<sub>2</sub> levels as we spend more time indoors. Higher concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> cause headaches, drowsiness, poor sleep, snoring, and other health issues. Opening your windows for short periods introduces fresh air into your home and ventilation system, helping create a healthier environment.

### KEEP IT CLEAN.



Fall is a great time to vacuum and steam clean your house top to bottom. Vacuums with a HEPA filter can remove up to 99.7% of allergens from carpets and steam cleaning can disinfect most surfaces and materials.

### KEEP IT DRY.



Excessive moisture creates mold and mildew and that can ruin your air quality. To get rid of mildew and mold, give your showers and toilets a good, hard scrub. Also, fix any leaky sinks, faucets and toilets, and keep your bathrooms well-ventilated.



## VENTILATION.



For optimal ventilation and air flow, your kitchen should have a vented range hood, and your bathrooms should have exhaust fans. During the fall, use the “10-Minute Rule” and run your range hood fan for 10 minutes after cooking to eliminate lingering food odors and particulates. Do the same after showering to remove humidity from your bathrooms.

## USE LOW VOC PRODUCTS.



Fall is a great time for home improvement projects but many products contain high levels of volatile organic compounds. Choose paint, stain, and varnish that are low in VOCs. If you buy new furniture or other home goods, consider letting them off-gas (allowing the chemicals in the materials to evaporate) in the garage before bringing them into your home. For the most protection, choose furniture certified by agencies such as OEKO-TEX or GOTS.

## CHANGE YOUR FILTERS.



It's time again to change your furnace filter before heating season kicks in. Remember, it's a good idea to change your filter at least every 90 days.

## TAKE YOUR FURNACE FOR A TEST DRIVE.



Schedule your annual heating system check-up before turning on your heat for the first time. A cleaning and tune-up will keep your furnace running properly and will help improve your indoor air quality.



In order to keep energy costs down, we've made our homes airtight with improved insulation and high-efficiency windows and doors. But that comes at a price. Reducing the ability for your home to "breathe" means that you are breathing more recirculated air, which carries dust, pollen, mold spores, pollutants and odors. These airborne enemies continuously cycle through your home, and all winter long, the concentration of contaminants in the air increases.

During winter, it's crucial to maintain your indoor air quality.

### KEEP IT CLEAN (AGAIN).



Regular and frequent vacuuming and steam cleaning can reduce airborne pollutants like dust, mold, and dust mites. Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter to contain particulates and use non-toxic cleaning products when possible. If harsh chemicals are necessary, make sure the area being cleaned is well ventilated to prevent fumes from lingering in the room.

### CHANGE YOUR FILTERS.



Your HVAC filter is your main defense against indoor air pollutants, but they need to be maintained, especially in winter when your furnace runs almost constantly. A dirty air filter is a major contributor to poor indoor air quality so change them often. You may also want to consider upgrading your filter to one with a higher MERV, or filtration efficiency rating, which increases the capture efficiency for particles that can cause health problems.



## CONSIDER USING AN AIR PURIFIER.



An air purifier can be an effective way to help keep your indoor air cleaner during the winter. Purifiers with activated carbon filters can remove gas, odors and chemicals from the air, and some air purifier technologies can capture bacteria, viruses, pollen, smoke, and pet dander.

## ADD HUMIDITY.



Extremely dry winter air can cause discomfort or illness. A humidifier can blow moisture vapor directly into your heating ducts to increase your comfort and help occupants breathe more comfortably. The right amount of humidity in your home can also help control dust, mites, mold and mildew.

## INSTALL AN ERV.



Energy-recovery ventilators (ERV's) bring fresh, outside air into your home and replace stale, polluted indoor air. ERV's also recover some of the heat and humidity from exhausted indoor air and add it to the cool, dry incoming air. This process is reversed in the warm months when indoor air is cooler and drier than outside air.

People tend to worry more about unhealthy outdoor air but indoor air quality tends to be worse than outside, and as stated earlier, can lead to a variety of respiratory and health issues.

Scalish Construction is building a Greater Cleveland by improving indoor air quality in commercial and residential buildings, making our city a healthier place to live and work. We are passionate about improving indoor air quality.

As buildings have become more energy efficient and airtight, indoor concentrations of allergens and pollutants have increased. Scalish Construction is dedicated to improving indoor air quality to help make your home a healthier place.

For more information on how Scalish Construction can test your home's air quality, perform a mold test, or design a healthy HVAC system to improve your indoor air quality, contact us:

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