

CENTRAL HUMIDIFIERS

At least once a year I write about the use of Central Humidifiers. My personal opinion is that they should all be BANNED from the market. How come? Well, with my wife Greta having her 14th operation on her sinuses just about 2 weeks ago, I have become an "expert" in the field.

Greta has seen at least 6 different physicians regarding chronic sinus infections that she has had since the age of 16. Two physicians are considered "world famous" in the area of ear, nose and throat. One physician at the University of Pennsylvania took care of the Presidents of the US at one time. Just to see him required a personal letter and telephone call from a physician in NYC.

So when the topic of humidification of a home came up, all 6+ physicians were in total agreement, DO NOT USE CENTRAL HUMIDIFIERS. Let me just give you my personal account why you would probably run and turn it off immediately (again this is your decision). When we were told not to use a central humidifier I had an AC person come to my other home and take it off the ductwork. I should have taken a picture of what was behind the humidifier and into the ductwork. From white to black to green and so on, this was what was found inside the duct. No question at all in my mind that fungus and mold growth was present, even without a culture. You see, your humidifier puts droplets of water into your ducts and the blower then blows it throughout your home. However at the point of entry, water clings to the ductwork and the environment with the moisture and heat is a breeding ground for mold and fungus.

You are usually able to clean the central humidifier, change filters, etc. but to get into the ductwork is almost impossible especially 5-10 feet from the point of where the humidifier is attached.

So you might ask what was the suggestion of these surgeons. The answer was clear. You DO NOT need to humidify an entire home. Even in the dry winter months there is enough moisture to suffice in rooms like a kitchen, family room, living room, hallways, etc. The room that might require humidification is where you spend most of your time - the bedroom. So they said, just purchase a simple ultrasonic cool air humidifier that you can clean easily after each use.

The Mayo Clinic doesn't mention anything about what I just wrote about but they do mention that ALL types of humidifiers should be cleaned thoroughly.

That's sort of a catch 22 since you can't get behind a central humidifier. Here's what they have to say about the problem or how to take care of the problem. Again, it's your choice of what to do:

Humidifiers: Vital steps for cleaning Humidifiers need regular maintenance, including daily water changes and frequent cleaning. Get more tips to ensure your humidifier doesn't become a household health hazard.

Humidifiers can provide relief from the annoying effects of dry winter air, such as dry skin and chapped lips. Humidifiers may also be soothing for people who have asthma flare-ups because of dry indoor air. But whatever the reason for using humidifiers, it's essential to properly maintain and clean them. Dirty humidifiers can create more problems than they solve.

Portable humidifiers

To keep portable or desktop humidifiers free of harmful mold, fungi and bacteria, be sure to follow the guidelines recommended by the manufacturer. These tips for portable humidifiers can also help:

- **Fill humidifiers with distilled or demineralized water.** Tap water contains minerals that can create bacteria-friendly deposits on the humidifier. When released into the air, these minerals often appear as white dust on your furniture. You may also breathe in some minerals that are dispersed into the air. In addition, use demineralization cartridges or filters if recommended by the manufacturer.
- **Change humidifier water every day.** Don't allow film or deposits to develop inside your humidifiers. Empty the tanks, dry the inside surfaces and refill with clean water every day.
- **Clean humidifiers every three days.** Unplug the humidifier before you clean it. Remove any scale, deposits or film from the tank or other parts of the humidifier with a 3 percent hydrogen peroxide solution, which is available at pharmacies. Some manufacturers recommend using chlorine bleach or other disinfectants. Check your humidifier's instructions. Always rinse the tank after cleaning to keep harmful chemicals from becoming airborne and then inhaled. Even if you plan to toss out your humidifier at the end of the dry winter season, it still needs frequent cleaning in the meantime.

- **Change humidifier filters regularly.** If the humidifier has a filter, change it at least as often as the manufacturer recommends and more often if it's dirty.
- **Check humidifier humidity settings.** Be sure your humidifier's humidity level is set between 30 percent and 50 percent. Humidity higher than 50 percent can promote the growth of dust mites, mold, fungi and bacteria. Some humidifiers have a built-in humidistat that shows the humidity level. If yours doesn't, consider buying a hygrometer to measure the humidity level. Hygrometers are typically available at hardware stores.
- **Keep the area around humidifiers dry.** If the area around a humidifier becomes damp or wet including windows, carpeting, drapes or table cloths turn the humidifier down or reduce how frequently you use it.
- **Prep humidifiers for storage.** Drain and clean humidifiers before storing them. And then clean them again when you take them out of storage for use.

Console and central humidifiers

If you have a console humidifier one that's built into a cabinet follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and maintenance. If you have a central humidifier one that's built into your central heating and cooling system ask your heating and cooling specialist about proper maintenance.

Keep extra supplies on hand if your system requires disposable filters or special sanitizing solutions. If the humidifier contains a tank, keep the water clean. Finally, be sure to have console or central humidifiers inspected regularly.