

# How do I improve my home's ventilation?



**Keeping the windows closed and the doors shut this winter could affect the quality of air in your home and, in turn, your health. Here are some tips to get the air flowing in your home without wasting money by letting heat escape.**

If you're anything like the majority of UK homeowners, a large proportion of the winter months are likely to be spent blocking up doors and windows to beat the draughts. And while this may seem sensible, blocking all air from entering and leaving your home can have a negative effect on its atmosphere. It can stop air from circulating properly, causing bad smells, smoke and cooking odours to linger and leading to damp and mould if the problem isn't dealt with promptly.

When looking at your home's ventilation, it's important to find the right balance: you want to make sure air can travel freely in and out of your property without wasting money by letting heat escape.

In this guide you'll find the benefits of proper ventilation, and ways to improve it in both the short and long-term in a way that will save you money.

## **The benefits of good ventilation**

The average person breathes in 12,000 litres of air a day (that's the equivalent of 150 bathtubs full). Good ventilation ensures that the air you breathe contains lots of vital oxygen, and removes indoor air pollutants like cooking odours, smoke, and carbon dioxide. This is particularly important if members of your family suffer from breathing problems like bronchitis and asthma, or have certain allergies. A well-ventilated home can also have a

positive effect on your mentality, with poor air quality having previously been shown to impair concentration levels.

Ventilation is especially important in the kitchen and bathroom, where [too much heat in the air hitting cold surfaces causes condensation](#), which can lead to problems with damp and mould. The average family produces 10 litres of moisture a day, so to avoid this building up, and to save you money on repair costs, it's important to ventilate your property.

It's also crucial to ensure that there is proper ventilation in any room containing a gas appliance. All gas appliances need good ventilation, as without enough oxygen around to burn they can produce carbon monoxide. Old boilers need particular attention, as they suck air from the room and expel it outside, reducing the air quality of the room. The best way to address this is to either make sure that your boiler is regularly serviced, or to upgrade to a newer model.

### **Quick ways to ventilate your home**

The first and most obvious ventilation solution is to open the windows in the kitchen when you're cooking dinner, in the bathroom when you're having a bath or shower, and in any rooms when you're hanging clothes out to dry. It's also important to ensure that you keep the door to the room closed, as this will keep the cool air restricted to the room you're ventilating, saving on heating costs, and stopping steamy air from causing condensation problems in the rest of your home.

When you're not bathing or cooking, you should try to keep all of the internal doors in your property open. This lets air flow freely and stops bad smells from lingering in one place. Closing the doors that lead nowhere, like wardrobe or pantry doors, will keep air moving through the other open doors rather than becoming trapped in an enclosed space. You can also help the air to flow by turning on a ceiling or desk fan. Turning on a ceiling fan can actually save you money, especially if you have high ceilings. It will blow the warm air that has naturally collected at the top of the room back down to ground level, allowing you to turn down the central heating.

You should also air out your home as often as you can. During the winter, try to open your windows three times a day, ensuring that your central heating is off at the time. If you work full time you may only get the opportunity to do this at the weekend, but it will make a real difference to the air quality of your home. If your windows have vents, leave them constantly open. They will make little difference to the heating levels in your home, but will give stale air the chance to escape and allow fresh air to get in.

### **How can I improve my home's ventilation in the long term?**

If you don't already have one, install an extractor fan above your kitchen hob, and use it whenever you're cooking. Make sure it links up to an exterior vent, instead of simply recycling the air that it sucks in. If your kitchen is

particularly humid you may also want to run the fan when you boil the kettle. You'll need to maintain your extractor fan to keep it in top ventilating condition, as it can easily become clogged up with grease. Try to clean it once every few months with a degreasing solution and some warm water. If you own an extractor with charcoal pellets, change them at least once a year as they can only absorb so many pollutants from the air before they stop being effective.

An extractor fan should also be installed in the bathroom. Run it whenever you're in the room to reduce condensation and get rid of bad odours. If you've had a particularly steamy shower, let the fan run for another half an hour after you leave the room. Like kitchen fans, extractor fans in the bathroom can become dirty and clogged. Clean the filter twice a year to keep your bathroom well ventilated and smelling fresh.