

Hot tips for a warm, dry, healthy home!

Getting through winter can be tough, especially if your home is not as warm and dry as it could be. There are some relatively easy steps you can take to keep your home cosy and warm.

There are four things that make a healthy home:

- Controlling heat loss
- Managing moisture
- Adequate ventilation
- An efficient source of heat



Go to homefit.org.nz and take the healthy homes quiz to find out how you could make your home warmer and drier

Ventilate your home in winter

If you've got a woodburner, following the key rules of not burning wet wood, keeping air vents open and only putting a small amount of wood on at a time will help generate good, efficient heat, but if your home is poorly ventilated and damp, you'll have to generate more heat to keep it warm.

Ventilation is important because it prevents moisture and airborne pollutants building up inside your home. Moisture-laden air is hard to heat and increases the likelihood of condensation and mould growth. But if there is too much ventilation (i.e. lots of draughts) you won't be able to keep your home warm. The right balance of ventilation will give you a home that is dry, healthy and warm.

We recommend you ventilate your home by opening windows on both sides of the house during the warmer parts of the day. This will promote airflow and allow the damp air to flow out and dry air to flow in. Shut the windows before the temperature drops, to avoid chilling off the structure of the house, what we call the "thermal mass". This makes the house harder to heat once evening arrives.

Don't leave the toilet, bathroom or any other windows open at night in winter. In the middle of the night, that frigid zero degree air (or colder), flooding in through that open window will overchill the house and the occupants.

Down with damp

It's a good idea to control the moisture made within your house from activities such as cooking or showers, so it doesn't spread to the rest of the house and cause further problems. If you don't have a rangehood, opening a window will help as long as it is pulling air out of the house not blowing it back in. Even something as simple as using pot lids when cooking will reduce the amount of moisture in your home. Bathroom fans can remove bathroom moisture, and using a vented or condensing clothes drier will stop extra moisture getting into your home. If you are doing something that makes a lot of steam, you can try and create an air flow to the outdoors by opening windows to pull the moisture out of the house. Just check there's not a breeze blowing into the house that will push moisture back in.

We recommend you avoid drying wet washing inside as it can generate a lot of moisture – try hanging washing in a garage or under an overhang if it is too wet to go outside.

It's all about striking the right balance, just enough ventilation, at the right time, to remove all contaminants and moisture, but not too much that we overchill the home.



Stopping unwanted draughts

It's a good idea to check your home for unwanted draughts – often they are easy to fix and doing so will save you warmth and money and make your home healthier.

Common sources of draughts are gaps around/under doors, ill-fitting windows and any other gaps, cracks or holes. Simple tricks like draught excluder flaps, under-door draught sausages/snakes and stick-on rubber sealing strips all help reduce unwanted air flow.

Doors and windows

- Check hinges and catches or latches – if they're loose, tighten them up. If your doors or windows don't fit in their frames snugly, get them repaired by a qualified builder.

- Add weather stripping – to seal gaps around doors and windows. Check your hardware store for the right types to use.
- Seal door or window trims – with clear or paintable sealant.
- Fit draft excluders – for gaps under doors. Use brush strip types for internal doors, and spring-loaded automatic seals for external doors.
- Replace damaged rubber seals around aluminium joinery.

Chimneys and fireplaces

- Block the chimneys of unused fireplaces – a rubbish bag filled with shredded newspapers works well. Make sure the bag is very obvious so no one tries to light a fire in a blocked chimney.

Ceilings and floors

- Make sure the ceiling hatch is correctly fitted – and use weather stripping to seal it.
- Insulate to help seal gaps between floorboards – install bulk underfloor insulation hard up against the floorboards to help reduce draughts coming in through the gaps. It will also reduce heat loss through the floor in general.
- Seal skirting boards and cornices – use flexible silicon-based or latex sealants, or remove them and foam the gap where the floor and wall or the ceiling and wall meet.

Source: Gen Less (genless.govt.nz/blocking-draughts)