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Saving energy: what's good for the wallet is also good for your health

“Ready for winter?” We love to ask that question when the weather starts to chill each autumn. But this year, getting ready for winter means preparing yourself for heating costs that are running at all-time highs. It's time to get serious about saving energy in your home. The good news is that, what's good for the wallet, is also good for your health. Here are some top tips:

1. Keep it cooler. Turn down your thermostat if you do not have elderly or infant residents. Adopt the “après ski” look at home; a high thermostat can dry out our nasal passages, and make us more susceptible to colds and flu.

2. Program your thermostat. If your home is unoccupied during the day, a programmable thermostat will keep your home cool during your absence, and then kick in with welcoming heat just before you return. You can also keep the heat low during your sleeping hours, but still wake up to a warm house in the morning.

3. Maintain your furnace. Regular maintenance of your heating unit will help keep your energy bill down too. Make sure that you have your furnace professionally checked at the beginning of the heating season. Late summer or early autumn is the best time to book your appointment, so keep this in mind for next year. Try to change furnace filters often.

4. Keep the cold out. Good storm doors and windows are a necessity in most of Canada. But they're only as good as their installation. Invest in superior quality products, have them professionally installed, and you will recoup your investment monies in no time.

5. Insulate, insulate and insulate! Especially in your attic. Heat rises, so just as a good hat keeps in our body heat, so a well-insulated attic holds in your home's warm air.

6. Get out the caulking gun. There are many hidden places where your expensive warm air escapes out into the cold. Walk around with a lit candle to check for drafts. Caulk around sill plates, doorframes, window frames, attic entrances, chimney flashing, and anywhere that any wiring, ducting, plumbing, or flues penetrate your exterior walls. Remember to insulate all of your exterior electrical outlets too.

7. Watch those kitchen and bathroom fans. Your fans are blowing out your expensive warm air, so use them wisely. You don't want mould, but you may want some extra humidity. Clean and reverse your ceiling fans – they'll help keep the warm air down where you need it.

8. Warm the floor. You may love hardwood, stone or tile, but you need cozy carpets underfoot during the winter months. Many people roll their rugs up again when the weather warms.

9. Use the snow. Snow is a great insulator. Some homeowners swear by the practice of banking snow around the foundation, especially in regions where the “basement” is an unheated crawlspace. Be sure not to block any furnace or dryer vents.

10. Keep a blanket box or basket. Have some cozy throws available where people gather. Invest in down duvets for your bedrooms – nothing else provides such instant comfort. Smaller down filled throws are new on the market, and are great for snuggling under during those evening hours spent in front of a book or a movie.

There's no question that fuel prices will hit Canadians in the coming months. Look for ways to be a frugal user of home heating this winter: it's healthy, wealthy and wise.



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