



Humidifiers and Vaporizers

The air in your home may be very dry in the winter months. Before using a humidifier or vaporizer consider the following.

Commonly asked Questions and Answers:

Is a humidifier or vaporizer useful for the management of asthma?

No, they are not recommended. The Asthma Society of Canada does not recommend the use of humidifiers or vaporizers for the treatment of asthma.

I frequently use a room humidifier in the winter months when the air in my home is very dry. Is there anything I need to be aware of?

If the room humidity level is below 30% and there is excess static electricity along with dry skin and frequent nose bleeds, you may want to use a humidifier. However, if you opt to use a humidifier or vaporizer it is important that you continue to monitor the humidity level with a hygrometer and shut the unit off when it reaches 45%. Humidity levels that are over 45% encourage mould, bacteria and dust mites growth, which are common asthma triggers.

What is a hygrometer and where can I buy one?

A hygrometer is a gauge that measures the humidity in your home. You can buy one from most hardware stores. Use a hygrometer to see if the indoor humidity in your home is between 30-50%. Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation has information on how to calibrate commercial hygrometers.

If you choose to use a humidifier or vaporizer it is very important to keep the unit clean. When humidifiers and vaporizers are left with standing water in them, mould and bacteria can grow. At the end of each day, empty the unit and rinse well.

Why would I use a humidifier or vaporizer?

A humidifier or a vaporizer may ease the discomfort of dry nose, throat, lips, and skin. These devices may also make breathing more comfortable. You may want to use a humidifier or vaporizer to help loosen the mucus in your throat or chest or you may use one in the winter to decrease the static electricity in your home.



What kind of humidifier or vaporizer should I use?

There are many kinds of humidifiers and vaporizers. Humidifiers and vaporizers come in different sizes. They may be portable and small enough to sit on a bedside table, or they may be a floor size model about the size of a small cabinet. Humidifiers can be attached to your furnace.

Types of humidifiers and vaporizers

Cool mist humidifier:

This is an electric device with a container to hold the water. Some cool mist humidifiers use a rotating disk that spins at high speed. This creates a moist mist. Some cool mist humidifiers use a fan that blows air through a moist material. Ultrasonic humidifiers create a cool mist by using sound vibrations.

Steam vaporizer:

This creates moisture in the air by heating the water into a hot mist. A steam vaporizer needs to be at about 4 feet (122 cm) away from you. Children should be kept away from a steam vaporizer because the hot mist could burn them.

Warm mist humidifier:

This is a type of steam vaporizer that cools the moist steam before it is released into the room.

Caring and cleaning your humidifier or vaporizer:

Water that stands still for a period of time allows bacteria and mould to grow. It is important to clean your humidifier or vaporizer following the manufacturer's directions very carefully.

Bedside humidifiers or vaporizers:

Fill the container to the line with **distilled** water. Tap water may contain minerals that could damage the equipment or create a white dust in your home. Distilled water may be bought in stores.

Put the humidifier on a flat surface about 4 feet from you. Protect this surface from water damage by placing towels or a waterproof mat underneath it.

Check the electrical cord. Do not use the device if the cord is damaged.

Place the unit so that it does not get the bed, curtains, carpeting, or other materials wet.



Other safety tips:

Keep steam vaporizers out of the reach of children as the steam may cause burns. Do not use the humidifier so much that the air in the room becomes overly moist. This may allow mould and bacteria to grow in your home. If you notice water beading up on windows and walls, or damp floors, move the device, decrease its level or discontinue its use.