

HOUSING AND WELLNESS PROGRAM

# A Comprehensive Wellness Guide for **Healthy Homes**

## **EXTENDING THE LIFE OF YOUR HOME**



First Nations Housing  
Professionals Association

L'Association des professionnels de  
l'habitation des Premières Nations



## Home

Prioritizing the wellness of the home is key to creating safe and supportive space for individuals and families. A home is more than just a physical space; it's a place of comfort, security, and belonging.

Creating a guide focused on supporting the wellness of the home is essential for promoting the overall well-being of its occupants. This guide offers practical tips and resources to strengthen various aspects of home wellness. By supporting the health of our homes, we also promote the physical and mental well-being of everyone who lives there.

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## Acknowledgement

The **First Nations Housing Professionals Association (FNHPA)** is delighted to introduce the Housing and Wellness Program, aimed at offering crucial information and guidance to First Nations individuals residing on reserve or engaged in housing-related roles. This initiative delivers educational programs, tools, and resources tailored for First Nations housing staff, residents, and youth. Through the implementation of this program, our aim is to address housing, health, and safety concerns holistically.



# EXTENDING THE LIFE OF YOUR HOME

Taking care of your home through regular maintenance can help extend its life and keep it safe, comfortable, and efficient. Small, consistent actions, like checking for repairs, cleaning, and addressing issues early, can prevent bigger problems over time. Maintaining your home also helps protect your investment, reduce costly repairs, and support a healthy living environment.

**Disclaimer:** This guide provides general information intended to support home wellness, safety, and well-being. Each First Nation may have its own housing policies, programs, bylaws, and community guidelines. Please refer to local policies and community resources for the specific rules, responsibilities, and supports that apply to your home.

# Home Maintenance

Home maintenance involves the regular care and upkeep of your home to keep it safe, functional, and in good condition. It plays an important role in:

## Preserving property value

Regular maintenance helps protect your investment by preventing small issues from becoming larger, more costly problems.

## Avoiding expensive repairs

Addressing minor concerns early can prevent more serious damage and reduce long-term repair costs.

## Ensuring safety

Routine checks of systems like electrical wiring and smoke alarms help keep your home safe.

## Supporting a healthy home environment

Proper maintenance helps prevent issues like mould, poor indoor air quality, and pests, which can affect health and well-being.

## Promoting wellness

A well-maintained home supports comfort, safety, and overall well-being in everyday life.

## Basic Home Maintenance Skills

These maintenance tasks can help you care for your home, prevent small issues from becoming bigger problems, and support a safe and healthy living environment:

### Everyday upkeep and minor repairs

- Safely replace light bulbs to maintain proper lighting and reduce safety risks.
- Use a plunger or drain snake to clear minor clogs in sinks, tubs, and toilets.
- Touch up small paint scratches or chips to maintain your home's appearance and prevent further wear.
- Perform simple repairs such as tightening screws, fixing cabinet doors, or patching small drywall holes.

### Systems, air quality, and efficiency

- Regularly change HVAC filters to improve indoor air quality and maintain system efficiency.
- Identify and seal leaks around windows, doors, and plumbing fixtures to prevent water damage and improve energy efficiency.

### Safety and emergency preparedness

- Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors regularly and replace batteries as needed to ensure early detection of hazards.
- Know the location of fire extinguishers and ensure they are accessible and not expired.
- Know where the furnace emergency shut-off is located and how to turn it off safely in an emergency.

### Outdoor and structural care

- Remove leaves and debris from gutters and downspouts to prevent drainage issues and protect your home's structure.
- Mow the lawn, trim bushes, and maintain garden beds to keep outdoor spaces tidy and healthy, where applicable.

### Prevention and reporting

- Take steps to prevent pests by keeping spaces clean, sealing entry points, and addressing signs of infestation early.
- Report maintenance concerns or needed repairs to your housing department or landlord as soon as possible to prevent further damage or safety issues.

**Note:** For details specific to your community, refer to your housing policy, rental agreement, or other local documents.

## Regular vs. Seasonal Maintenance

Both regular and seasonal maintenance are important for keeping your home safe, efficient, and in good condition. While they work together, they differ in timing and purpose.

### Regular Maintenance

- Includes ongoing tasks performed year-round to keep your home running smoothly and prevent wear and tear.
- Helps identify and address issues early, reducing the risk of costly repairs and supporting overall cleanliness, safety, and efficiency.
- Examples include cleaning, vacuuming, and dusting; checking and replacing HVAC filters; testing smoke and carbon monoxide detectors; and inspecting for leaks or minor damage. Regular visual checks of roofs, decks, stairs, and handrails can also help identify loose, damaged, or unsafe conditions early.

### Seasonal Maintenance

- Includes tasks scheduled around seasonal changes to prepare your home for different weather conditions.
- Focuses on prevention by reducing the risk of damage from weather-related stress such as freezing temperatures, heat, or heavy rainfall.
- Examples include winterizing pipes, cleaning gutters in the fall, servicing air conditioning units in the spring, and checking insulation before winter.

Here are some examples of seasonal maintenance tasks to help prepare your home for changing weather conditions:

#### Spring

- Inspect and clean windows and screens.
- Check the roof for damage, including loose or missing shingles.
- Prepare garden beds and landscaping for planting.

- Service lawn equipment such as mowers and trimmers.
- Clean and inspect outdoor lighting fixtures.
- Wash and inspect siding, trim, and other exterior surfaces.

#### Summer

- Clean and repair outdoor furniture as needed.
- Inspect and clean decks or patios. Check for loose boards or railings and reapply sealant if needed.
- Prune trees and shrubs to support healthy growth.
- Clean and inspect the barbecue grill.
- Service and test irrigation systems.
- Repair cracks or damage to driveways or walkways.

#### Fall

- Clean gutters and downspouts to prevent blockages.
- Inspect and clean the chimney and fireplace.
- Seal gaps around windows and doors to prevent heat loss.
- Drain and winterize outdoor faucets and irrigation systems.
- Service heating systems, including furnaces and boilers.

Store outdoor furniture and garden tools for winter.

#### Winter

- Monitor and remove excessive snow from the roof to help prevent damage.
- Inspect and replace weather stripping to improve insulation.
- Keep walkways and driveways clear of snow and ice.
- Schedule regular checks of your heating system to ensure it runs efficiently during cold weather.

## Urgent vs. Preventative Maintenance

Home maintenance generally falls into two categories: preventative and urgent, each serving a distinct purpose.

### Preventative Maintenance

- Involves planned, proactive actions to prevent issues before they occur.
- Supports safety, efficiency, and overall home well-being by reducing wear and tear.
- Helps extend the lifespan of systems and equipment and lowers the risk of costly or disruptive repairs.
- Examples include inspecting HVAC systems, sealing leaks, cleaning gutters, and replacing air filters.

### Urgent Maintenance

- Also called emergency maintenance, this involves addressing issues that require immediate attention to protect safety and prevent further damage.
- Is unplanned and reactive, requiring a quick response to restore safety and function.
- Examples include burst pipes, electrical hazards, heating failures in winter, or serious structural damage.

While preventative maintenance helps reduce the likelihood of emergencies, urgent maintenance ensures quick action when unexpected issues arise. Both are essential for maintaining a safe and healthy home.

## Interior Maintenance - HVAC System Maintenance

HVAC systems play an important role in maintaining comfort, air quality, and safety in your home. Regular maintenance helps ensure they operate efficiently and reliably. Common issues that can affect system performance include:

### Dirty filters

Can restrict airflow, causing the system to work harder and use more energy.

### Low refrigerant levels

Can reduce cooling efficiency and may indicate a leak that requires professional attention.

### Thermostat issues

Can lead to uneven temperatures or prevent the system from turning on or off properly.

### Electrical issues

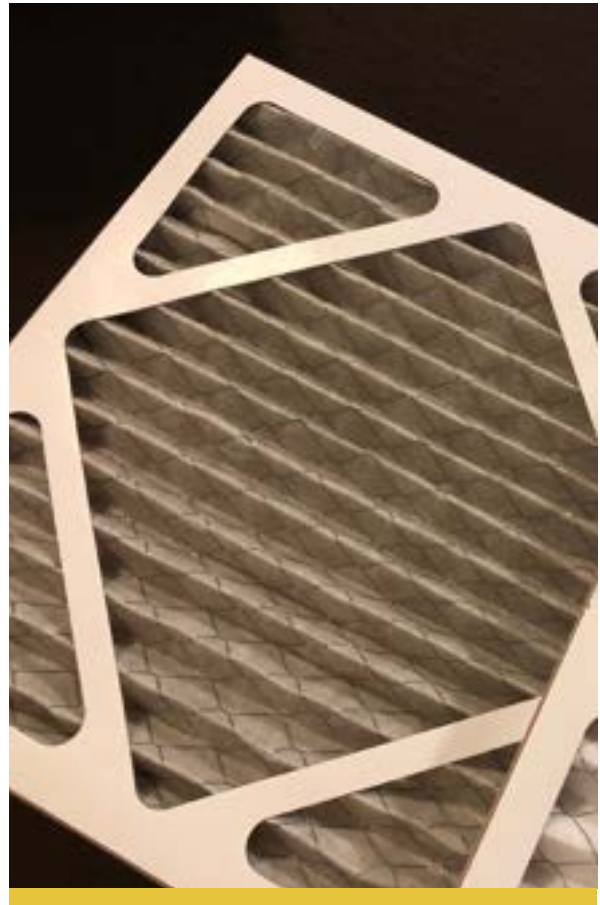
Faulty wiring or tripped breakers can stop the system from working and create safety concerns.

### Dust and debris buildup

Can reduce efficiency and lead to overheating or freezing, especially when buildup occurs on coils.

### Poor airflow

Can be caused by duct leaks, blockages, or blower issues, reducing comfort and overall system performance.



## Common HVAC Maintenance Tasks

### Replace air filters

Check monthly and replace around every three months. Dirty filters restrict airflow and can affect indoor air quality.

### Clean vents

Dust vents regularly so air can circulate properly.

### Check thermostat settings

Make sure settings are accurate and energy efficient. Programmable or smart thermostats can help maintain comfort.

### Watch for unusual noises or odours

New sounds or smells can be early signs of mechanical or electrical issues.

### Inspect and seal ductwork

Look for visible damage or leaks and report concerns so they can be repaired.

### Clean the condensate drain

Keep the drain clear to prevent blockages and potential water damage.

### Schedule annual maintenance

Have a qualified technician inspect and tune up the system once a year.

### Check refrigerant levels

A qualified professional should inspect refrigerant levels to support efficient cooling and identify leaks.

**Note:** These tips provide general guidance. Some HVAC maintenance tasks should be completed by qualified professionals. Always follow manufacturer instructions and your community's housing policies, and report concerns to your housing department or landlord as required.

## Interior Maintenance - Plumbing

Regular plumbing maintenance helps prevent health concerns, costly repairs, and water damage. Key maintenance tasks include:

### Check for leaks

Look for damp spots, water stains, dripping, or mould under sinks and around pipes. Report leaks promptly to prevent damage.

### Prevent clogs

Use drain strainers to catch hair and food, and avoid putting grease or solid waste down drains.

### Avoid chemical drain cleaners

These can damage pipes and affect water quality. Use a plunger or drain snake instead.

### Flush properly

Only flush toilet paper. Do not flush wipes, paper towels, or hygiene products.

### Watch water pressure

Very high pressure can strain pipes and fixtures. Report concerns if pressure seems unusually strong.

### Inspect toilets

Check for running water, leaks, or poor flushing, which may signal worn parts.

### Insulate exposed pipes

Protect pipes in cold areas to reduce the risk of freezing and bursting during winter.

### Water heater upkeep

Sediment buildup or leaks can affect performance. Annual maintenance should be completed by a qualified professional.

### Schedule professional inspections

A licensed plumber can inspect the system periodically to identify concerns and help prevent major issues.

**Note:** Some plumbing tasks should only be completed by qualified professionals. Always follow your community's housing policies and report plumbing issues to your housing department or landlord as required.

## Interior Maintenance - Electrical System

Electrical systems require routine attention to help prevent safety hazards and ensure reliable power throughout the home. Key maintenance tasks include:

### Check outlets and switches

Look for loose fittings, cracks, discoloration, or warmth. Report damaged outlets or switches for repair.

### Inspect cords and plugs

Replace power or extension cords that are frayed, cracked, or damaged to reduce fire and shock risks.

### Watch for wiring issues

Be alert to exposed, frayed, or damaged wiring, especially in basements, utility areas, or near appliances.

### Inspect the electrical panel

Check the breaker or fuse box for signs of damage, corrosion, overheating, or tripped breakers. Make sure circuits are clearly labelled and not overloaded.

### Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors

Test monthly, replace batteries as needed, and keep detectors clean to ensure they work properly.

### Schedule professional inspections

A licensed electrician can inspect the system periodically to identify safety concerns and ensure compliance with electrical standards.

### Upgrade outdated wiring

Homes with older systems, such as knob-and-tube or aluminum wiring, may require upgrades to improve safety and reduce fire risk.

**Note:** Electrical work can be dangerous. Repairs and upgrades should only be completed by qualified professionals. Always follow local housing policies and report concerns to your housing department or landlord.

## Interior Maintenance - Appliances

Regular maintenance helps appliances operate safely, run efficiently, and last longer. Key maintenance tasks include:

### Clean regularly

Wipe down the inside and outside of appliances such as refrigerators, ovens, microwaves, dishwashers, washers, and dryers. Clean the dryer lint trap and exhaust vent regularly to reduce fire risk.

### Inspect seals and gaskets

Check seals on refrigerators, freezers, and ovens. Replace damaged seals to maintain proper temperature and energy efficiency.

### Replace and clean filters

Change filters in refrigerators, range hoods, vacuums, air purifiers, and other appliances as recommended. Clean reusable filters regularly to improve performance and indoor air quality.

### Test safety features

Make sure oven latches, burner ignitions, door locks, and other safety features are working properly. Repair or report faulty components promptly.

### Schedule professional servicing

Arrange maintenance for major appliances such as HVAC systems, water heaters, and other large appliances, following manufacturer or professional guidance.

### Follow manufacturer instructions

Use and maintain appliances according to the owner's manual to support safety, efficiency, and long-term performance.



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