



## Want to Get Sick Less this Winter?

### *Humidity plays an important role*

If you'd like to cut down on your sick days, one of the best things you can do is regulate the relative humidity (RH) in your living space. Watching your humidity has other benefits too, like keeping the dust mite population down and preserving the quality of your wood and leather goods. It also allows you to feel more comfortable without raising the thermostat in winter, saving you money. Who wouldn't like that?

**1) As far as health goes**, our bodies rely on thin and delicate mucous membranes to catch and dispose of nasty viruses and bacteria before they can invade our bloodstream. After getting stuck to the mucous in our nose and throat, the bugs generally end up sliding down into our stomachs where the acid kills them. But what happens when our membranes become exposed to the heater-dried air we live in during the winter months?

That dry air sucks the moisture out and off of your body to the point that the mucous membranes begin to crack, thereby leaving little tiny open doors for bugs to sneak directly into your bloodstream. You know you're getting to that point when you get that dry, scratchy feeling in the back of your throat, giving you a clue that a cold may be "coming on". Time for some saline drops! (Or you can regulate the RH in your home; more on that below.)

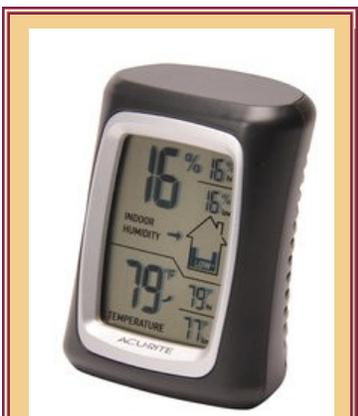
**2) Regarding comfort**: The drier the air is, the more rapid the rate of evaporation of moisture from your body. This process cools you down, which is NOT what you want in the middle of winter. And then what happens? We usually crank the heat up higher, which in turn dries the air even more, perpetuating the moisture loss (and higher heat bills). Avoid this undesirable catch-22; once again, regulating the RH in your home is key, and represents the lowest-cost way to lower those bills.

**3) Creaky floors, wooden furniture, pianos, leather goods and electronics will thank you**: The proper amount of moisture in the air helps to keep wood and leather fibers plump to the

proper degree, and keeps the glue in your furniture and instruments from cracking. It also helps reduce the static charges that can render the hard drive on your computer useless.

So what is the best humidity level to maintain, and how do you do it? Experts recommend between 40 and 50% is the "sweet spot" that keeps mites at bay, maintains your comfort level better, and keeps your furniture from drying out and falling apart.

**Solution #1**: If you are home most of the time and would like to save money during our lovely economical situation, you need three things: **a humidity monitor (an Acu-Rite model is pictured, \$8 locally), a pot of water, and a stove.**



A Humidity Monitor helps you track humidity levels in your living space, giving you greater control over your environment along with your health and comfort.

Set up the monitor in a central location of your home, preferably near the thermostat, or in whatever space you are most concerned about regulating. Heat the pot of water on the stove (it's best to use filtered water and add a shot of vinegar to avoid hard water stains). Depending on the humidity level in your home, you can just adjust the burner. Once you reach that ideal window of 40-50%, you can turn down the burner to the point that you just see a little vapor rising off the surface of the water, and keep it going.

Depending on how cold it is outside and how well-sealed and insulated your windows are, you may need to watch for condensation on

them. Too much can foster mold growth (which you can just keep cleaned up with soap and water), and can also warp your wooden sills. In another article we will go over mold and how to keep it controlled.

**Solution #2**: **Invest in a whole-house central humidifier.** I used to do the pot-and-stove method, and thought going to a humidifier wouldn't do much for me. I am so happy we finally put one in!

For one thing, the entire house feels nice, whereas the kitchen received the highest concentration of humidity in the past.

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Additionally, I no longer have to worry if my pot will boil dry. I don't have to think about the humidity at all! It pampers us while we go about our daily lives, and that's a great feeling.

**One last note:** In a small home with a relatively high number of residents, you may have the opposite problem and need to de-humidify. If that is the case, we recommend you flip on a bathroom fan at times of highest activity (morning showers, afternoon dinner preparation). It will draw fresh outside air in (through any cracks in your home's envelope) and carry excess humidity out.

Please call Adrian at 459-8100 if you'd like to put in a central humidifier; we'll be glad to help! ♦

-Jennifer Rodriguez

## Winter is coming....

We are running our **Fall Special** on our **Precision Tune-Up and Professional Cleaning (PTPC)**. The service is normally \$98 for your residential furnace, but **until October 21** we will get your heater into shape for:

**\$79**

(most areas and most residential systems)

Call in and make your appointment before the cold hits hard!

**Thank-you, and have a wonderful autumn!**

—Your Home Comfort Team at  
Big Sky Heating and AC, LLC



**Big Sky Heating and Air Conditioning, LLC**

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Return Service Requested

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### Got-Extra-Zucchini Spoon Bread

1 c. fresh or frozen whole kernel corn	2 eggs	<i>From www.bhg.com</i>
½ c. chopped onion (1 med.)	½ c. milk	
½ c. green sweet pepper strips (1 med.)	¼ t. pepper	
½ c. water	½ t. salt	
1 c. chopped zucchini	Several dashes bottled hot pepper sauce	
1 c. shredded cheddar cheese (4 oz.)	1 c. chopped tomato	
½ c. cornmeal		

In a large saucepan combine corn, onion, pepper strips, and water. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer for 5 minutes. Do not drain. Stir in zucchini, tomatoes, cheese, and cornmeal. Set aside.

In a small mixing bowl beat eggs slightly; stir in milk, salt, pepper, and hot pepper sauce. Stir egg mixture into the vegetable mixture in the saucepan.

Turn the mixture into a greased 1-1/2-quart casserole. Bake, uncovered, in a 350 F. degree oven about 40-50 minutes or until set. Let stand for 5 minutes. Makes 6 servings.

*You've got to try this at least once; it's wonderful! Enjoy it for breakfast or lunch, or as a side dish with a meat entrée and salad for dinner. Perfect end-of-summer fare!*

*Thank-You for  
choosing  
Big Sky!*