



## Health Notes

### Safe Use of Humidifiers

The weather is getting colder! Fall and winter in Minnesota means dry air (low humidity), which can contribute to dry skin, bloody noses, respiratory irritation, and a variety of other health issues. A humidifier can be helpful in the winter months, but it can also be harmful if not properly cared for. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have a list of recommendations for safe humidifier use:

- Use distilled water in your humidifier to reduce mineral deposits inside the machine.
- Clean your humidifier every three days while you are using it. Unplug the machine, drain the water, and use a scrubber to remove any build-up.
- Clean your humidifier according to manufacturer instructions and allow it to thoroughly dry before storing it away after winter.
- Use a hygrometer to determine humidity levels in your home. According to the CPSC, humidity levels in your home should be between 30% and 50%. Do not allow humidity levels to get higher than 50% - the extra moisture provides a breeding ground for bacteria. Hygrometers can be purchased at any hardware store.
- If condensation appears on walls, windows, or the area around the humidifier, either turn the humidifier down or move it to a different location. As stated previously, extra moisture allows bacteria to grow more easily.

It is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions for the maintenance of your humidifier. When a humidifier is used and cared for properly it can be a benefit to your family's health during these long, dry winter months.

*Information in this article is from the EPA's website ([https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-08/documents/humidifier\\_factsheet.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-08/documents/humidifier_factsheet.pdf)) and the CPSC's website (<https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/5046.pdf>).*