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Doctor your deck this season

Your deck requires the same maintenance and attention you give to your car and household appliances. Cleaning and repairing it should be a regular task, similar to giving your car an oil change. When was the last time you gave your deck a tune-up?

Over time, your deck will deteriorate and start to show signs of wear and tear, according to Pat Coughlin of The Flood Company, makers of stains, finishes and cleaning products for outdoor decks for more than 150 years. Coughlin suggests three steps to help you repair your deck and become your own "deck mechanic."

1. Give your deck a tune-up. The sunny days you enjoy during the summer wreak havoc on your deck over time, turning it gray. By cleaning the deck, you can remove the gray as well as nail stains and ground-in dirt. Dekswood Deck Cleaner and Brightener from Flood is an environmentally safe, concentrated non-bleach cleaner that brightens wood to enhance its natural beauty. For stubborn mildew-stains, use a small amount of household bleach diluted with water to kill the mildew. Then be sure to rinse thoroughly.

2. Perform a deck check. By giving your deck a check-up, you'll be able to identify and remedy the majority of problems that can occur from regular use and exposure. For example, protruding nail heads are usually caused by the contraction and expansion of the wood during the changing climate in the summer and winter months.

"In most cases you can solve this problem by driving the nail back in with a hammer," says Coughlin. "However, ideally you should pry out the nail and replace it with a galvanized deck screw. By securing the boards with screws, you

minimize the damaging effects of the contraction and expansion of wood."

Another problem you can identify by performing a deck check is rotting areas such as deck boards, stairs or rails. An easy way to determine if the wood is rotting is to push a screwdriver into the wood. If it penetrates easily, you have rotted wood that needs replaced.

3. Protect the deck. Two of nature's most damaging elements, the sun's ultra-violet rays and moisture, are especially damaging to your deck. Protect your deck with an oil-based, clear wood finish or stain. The Flood Company's CWF-UV penetrates the wood grain, reviving the wood while further protecting it against moisture damage from the inside. CWF-UV revitalizes dried out, weather-beaten wood, restoring its original appearance. A clear wood finish should be applied every other year.

To increase the amount of time between needing to refinish, consider using a semi-transparent or solid color stain. The Flood Company manufactures semi-transparent and solid stains that will last for years. Flood Semi-Transparent Deck & Siding Stain is guaranteed against peeling and fading on decks for three years and siding for five years. Flood Solid Color Deck & Siding Stain is guaranteed against peeling on decks for five years and siding for fifteen years. Both are available in a wide array of colors.

"The short time you spend repairing your deck will give you beautiful exterior wood that can be enjoyed for years to come," says Coughlin.

For more information, call The Flood Company, 1-800-321-3444, or visit their web site at www.floodco.com.

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