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## Prevent an unhealthy environment Curb heat loss with new windows

An energy-efficient house can also be a healthy house, especially for those who pay attention to their windows.

By taking measures to curb heat loss through windows, you not only lower energy costs year round, you also have an opportunity to improve indoor air quality and sustain recommended humidity levels (30%-55%) without window condensation. Excessive moisture often leads to unhealthy mould growth on the sills and deep inside the framework structure.

Now is a good time for homeowners to ask: Do structural problems exist that contribute to heat loss and an unhealthy environment? Here is a preliminary checklist to identify such problems and help get you started:

- Are my windows difficult to operate?
- Do windows and/or window frames appear to be cracked?
- Is there moisture damage and stains on windows and doors?
- Is there moisture between the two panes of glass?
- Is there visible mold growth on any surfaces?
- Was there condensation on glazing, jams or sills?
- Is there blistering or peeling paint?
- Is any of the caulking cracked or missing?

Repair and moisture control options range from quick fix solutions— like cleaning, painting, moving curtains, plants and window screens— to permanent, equity-building window unit replacements. Take a look online at

[www.healthsmartwindows.com](http://www.healthsmartwindows.com) to help with options available to you.

"Keeping moisture off the glass is achieved by maintaining the warmest overall surface temperature," says Erin Johnson spokesperson for Edgetech, an industry leader in 'health smart' windows. "When making replacement decisions therefore, avoid windowpane edging materials that are made of aluminium or stainless steel. Instead, spacers like the "super spacer" are made entirely of polymer structural foam. This material conducts heat and cold at a rate 950 times lower than aluminium, and 85 times less than stainless steel. If you can't tell what the edging materials are made of, be sure to ask."

For the most durable, long-term investment, homeowners may want to avoid plastic spacers as well. The rigidity of plastic can cause seal failure and it can literally crack the glass edges on extremely cold or hot days.

"If you don't tackle and solve water damage problems," Johnson says, "you risk structural deterioration, energy inefficiency, and perhaps most importantly, unsightly and unhealthy mould growth. Mould is a fungus that releases chemicals and spores. As it grows on window sills or deep inside the framework, it can cause irritations, headaches, allergic reactions and even serious illnesses for the occupants, especially infants, pregnant women, elderly people, and those with respiratory problems."

—News Canada

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