

Tips For Maintaining Your Sanctuary

Building Maintenance

- ✓ **GUTTERS:** Make sure they are properly connected to drains that are directing water away from your home. Keep gutters clean of debris.
- ✓ **EXTERIOR:** Periodically check integrity of exterior siding, roofing, chimney, vents, skylights and windows so that you can address any potential areas of water intrusion before they become significant
- ✓ **SPRINKLERS:** Make sure your sprinkler system is functioning properly and not spraying or draining water near your foundation
- ✓ **SEPTIC SYSTEM:** If you are on septic, be sure to maintain your drains in septic-safe fashion and have your system professionally inspected/pumped every 3 years.
<https://www.epa.gov/septic/how-care-your-septic-system>
- ✓ **SPIGOTS:** Be sure to detach any hoses from exterior spigots and winterize pipes if necessary
- ✓ **DRAINAGE:** Keep an eye on your exterior drainage. You do not want water pooling near your home, French drains failing, soil sloping towards your home rather than away, or excessive moisture in your crawl space or basement. If you notice these things occurring, call a professional to mitigate the problem.
- ✓ **MONITOR INDOOR HUMIDITY:** Purchase a [hygrometer](#) for each level of your home to monitor your indoor humidity. Ideal humidity is between 30-50%. Low humidity can increase dust accumulation, and higher humidity is conducive to microbial growth. Whole-house or portable humidifiers or dehumidifiers can be used as needed and cleaned occasionally with hydrogen peroxide.
- ✓ **HVAC:** Have your unit(s) professionally inspected by an [ACCA](#) professional regularly. Change furnace filters monthly, or according to manufacturer's recommendations. Upgrade your filter (MERV 13-16) if your system can handle it. If you have rigid ducts, consider cleaning them every 3-7 years with a [NADCA](#) or [Rotobrush](#) professional who will use a truck-mounted vacuum system (physical agitation/removal only without antimicrobials or fragrances). If you have a swamp cooler, be sure to have it cleaned and serviced before and after each season of use (winterize if needed).
- ✓ **LEAK DETECTION:** Place a [rubber Xtreme mat](#) on the floor of each sink cabinet and under your hot water heater to catch potential water leaks. Place a [leak alarm](#) on top of each mat (and any other places subject to leaks) to alert you of moisture before it becomes a big problem!

Organization and Decluttering

• MINIMIZE DUST COLLECTORS

- If you have not already decluttered, this is a great time to go through your belongings and take inventory of those that serve a purpose or bring you joy vs those that are visually distracting or difficult to clean.
 - Is this a good time to let some things go? Could you give the item(s) to a family member or donate? Would you like to take a photo of the item to maintain the memory?
 - Is there a smarter way to store some items (lightbulbs, batteries, makeup, seasonal decorations, essential oils, etc) that would make them easier to keep clean - such as in a plastic bins?

Air filtration/dilution/movement

- Keep ceiling fans running to minimize dead zones
- Keep air circulation going on your HVAC system, even if heat or AC are not on.
- If you live in an area with minimal outdoor contaminants/humidity, open doors and windows frequently for fresh air. Consider a HRV or ERV for enhanced ventilation/air dilution
- Use a quality filter on your HVAC system and change it regularly
- Use portable air filtration units in each bedroom, and other rooms you spend considerable time in. Clean the exterior and change the filters regularly. Below are some of Jenny's favorites.
 - [IQAir](#)
 - [Austin Air](#)
 - [IAdapt Air](#) (use discount code CE10 for 10% off)
 - [Air Doctor](#)

Additional Tips

- Consider a shoe-free home to minimize tracking in dirt or contaminants from the outdoors or other buildings you've been into.
- For a time, it may be helpful to change clothes or even shower when you return home from questionable environments.
- Encourage your children to leave school bags in the garage or other designated location if possible
- Refrain from bringing library books or other used items into your home until you are more resilient
- Clean your home (vacuum, wet wipe, dry wipe) and run air purifiers after hosting overnight guests.
- Brush your pets regularly to minimize pet hair/dander, and consider wiping their paws before they come in from outdoors.
- Keep cat litter boxes cleaned out, and consider running an air purifier nearby.
- Vacuum your suitcase after travel and keep loosely covered with a plastic bag. Better yet, get one with a non-porous surface that can be damp-wiped.
- Clean your car's interior regularly, as you would with your home (vacuum, wet wipe, dry wipe) and change the cabin filter with oil changes.
- Keep indoor plants happy and healthy! Stressed plants tend to lead to excess microbial growth. Do not over-water or under-water. If you notice microbial growth on the soil, re-pot.

Cleaning

- ✓ • **LAUNDRY:**
 - Do not allow wet laundry/towels to sit in a hamper where they may develop microbial growth.
 - If human-habitat actinomycetes are a concern for you, wash your bed linens, bath towels, bath mats, shower curtain several times per week. Use a [mattress cover](#) that can be washed weekly to protect your mattress.
 - If you hang wet items to dry after washing, be sure that they dry within one day. Use a [dehumidifier](#) or exhaust fans in drying area if needed, and don't overcrowd items on your drying rack.
 - Leave your washer lid open between cycles so that it can dry out. Clean the drum once a month according to the manufacturer's instructions.
 - Front loaders are discouraged, but if you have one then please leave it open as much as possible and wipe out the door gasket monthly.
 - Launder slipcovers, pillow covers, washable curtains, pet beds, throw rugs as needed (quarterly is usually enough).

- ✓ • **HOUSE CLEANING** (hire a professional, or wear an N95 or P100 mask):
 - Weekly cleaning of easily-accessed surfaces is recommended to control dust/contaminants
 - HEPA vacuum floors, couches, mattress and other large furnishings. For HEPA vacuuming, I like the [Soniclean Whisperjet C2 ULPA vacuum](#), the [Miele Complete C3 Calima HEPA vacuum](#), or the [Shark Rotator Professional Lift-Away HEPA vacuum](#) (this one only for maintenance cleaning).
 - Wet wipe hard surfaces using a [reusable microfiber cloth](#). In a bucket or spray bottle, make a solution of 5 drops of non-toxic [liquid dish soap](#) and 1 quart of water. Add 2 T of lemon juice or vinegar if actinomycetes/endos are problematic for you. Solution can be doubled, tripled, etc.
 - Dry-wipe hard surfaces using [electrostatic Swiffer-style cloths](#).
 - Clean bathrooms and kitchens as you normally would.
 - Toss old food from fridge/pantry each week.
 - Do not keep a compost pail indoors.
 - Use a squeegee on glass shower doors after each use and run exhaust fan for an hour after showering/bathing

- ✓ • **MONTHLY DRAIN CLEANING**
 - Pour one cup (or up to whole bottle) of [hydrogen peroxide](#) into each drain, let sit for 10-15 minutes, then let hot water run through for several minutes. For drains that can be accessed with a cleaning brush (cone-shaped bottle brush), use the same cleaning solution as above (6 drops dish soap, 1 qt water, 2 T vinegar or lemon juice) to scrub them out.

**This handout was created by Jenny Johnson at [Simplified Wellness Designs](#) as part of a series of continuously updated instructional guides for her personal clients, [CIRS Healing Collective](#) members, and [Equipped to Overcome CIRS](#) online course participants.*

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