

by James_Dulley

Dear Jim: My family likes to be cool during the summer, but the electric bills kill my budget. What are the best ways to use ventilation to stay comfortable without using the air conditioner as much? - Michael A. Dear Michael: Proper ventilation can keep you feeling cooler and reduce your electric bills for air-conditioning. The actual air temperature in your home is not really important. What is important is how you feel. Human nature being what it is, people often perceive their comfort level by the temperature setting. Tell them it is lower and they think they feel cooler. Moving air can feel many degrees cooler than still air at the same temperature. This is partially due to the fact the more heat is transferred from your skin to moving air. Also, as air flows over your skin, moisture evaporates, even if you are not noticeably sweating, and this feels cooler. Installing a ceiling paddle fan is what is commonly thought of as indoor ventilation and it does work well. Run the ceiling fan on medium or high speed with the air blowing downward to create a direct breeze on your skin. During the winter, reverse the blade rotation and run it on low speed. This gently circulates the air around the room without creating a chilly breeze. Keep in mind though, electric fans do not cool a room. They actually heat the room air because all of the electricity they use ends up as heat energy. When no one is in a room to take advantage of the cooling effect of the breeze, always switch off electric fans, including ceiling fans. Small personal fans can be very effective to create a breeze directly on your skin. If you purchase a small fan, select one that can also be used as a space heater during winter. This will allow you to set your furnace thermostat lower and also save energy when heating. New small personal fans are available which don't have a protective cage over the blades. The blade material is soft and will not harm your skin. By not having a cage which creates resistance, the air flow is more efficient. Natural ventilation is most effective and it is free. When you open double-hung windows or an entry door covered by a storm/screen door, open both the top and bottom sashes a little. This creates a natural vertical air flow which, even on a still day, mixes with the indoor air. Open windows just a little on the windward side of the house or on the lower floor of a two-story home. Open the windows much wider on the other side or on the second floor. This creates a higher velocity for the incoming air for a stronger breeze. Building a solar chimney on the sunny side of your house will create an upward draft and draw air from throughout your home. The following companies offer air ventilation products: Holmes Products, (800) 284-3267, www.holmesproducts.com; Hunter, (888) 830-1326, www.hunterfan.com; Kaz, (800) 332-1110, www.kaz.com; Vornado, (800) 234-0604, www.vornado.com; and Windchaser Products, (800) 405-2943, www.windchaserproducts.com. Dear Jim: I just moved into a house and it has some insulation in the attic, but it is under a plywood floor. I want to add a lot more insulation over it. Will the plywood floor under the new insulation cause a problem? Bob J. Dear Bob: The plywood itself is not a problem, but if it is installed from wall to wall, it can act as a vapor barrier. If you are installing much insulation over it, it should not create a problem from a vapor standpoint. It would not hurt to use a hole saw and cut many one-inch holes through the plywood. This provides air flow through it for any moisture to escape. The moisture comes from the living area below. Send inquiries to James Dulley, Bend Weekly, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit www.dulley.com.

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