

HEALTHY, WEALTHY & WISE

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Understanding the Role of Humidity in Your Home

Water is an important part of our lives. It covers 70% of the Earth's surface and makes up most of our body weight. Water exists underground, as mountain snow, as glacial ice, as clouds above us and so much more. What we rarely consider is that there is also water in the air all around us. This water, in the form of vapor, is called humidity and while too little is bad for our health too much can be bad as well.

Discovering Water Vapor

The most common measure of humidity is relative humidity (RH). Relative humidity measures the amount of water vapor in the air compared to the maximum amount of water that could be suspended in the air at that temperature. RH is always expressed as a percentage. At 100% relative humidity, air can hold no more water vapor at that temperature. At 50% RH, the air is holding half the amount of water vapor that it could suspend at that temperature.

You should try to keep humidity levels in your home between 30-50% RH for optimal comfort and health. If humidity is too low, say below 20%, your skin, eyes and hair will feel dry and uncomfortable. Certain materials like leather and wood will also begin to dry out.

High humidity- 60% or above- for extended periods can cause many problems including health issues and damage to structural materials. If relative humidity remains above 60% for very long, there is an increased potential for mold on wood, drywall and other interior surfaces.

Signs of high humidity are: a sticky or clammy feeling; wood floors that are "cupped"; sticking doors; condensation on windows, air conditioning vents or walls; musty odors and mold growth on interior surfaces and furnishings.

The Causes of High Humidity

High humidity can be a sign that there is a leak in the structure, or problems with the air conditioning and ventilation system, building envelope or foundation issues. If you have a basement or crawlspace, a damp musty odor is an indication that there may be moisture or humidity problems. Musty odors are more than a nuisance. They are an indicator of wood rot, mold growth or other microbial issues. Microbes can also pose a health risk to occupants of the structure.

Warm air can hold more water vapor than cool air. This is why condensation occurs on cold surfaces. As air comes



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Lime Chicken Soft Tacos

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 pounds skinless, boneless chicken breast meat - cubed
- 1/8 cup red wine vinegar
- 1/2 lime, juiced
- 1 teaspoon white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 10 (6 inch) flour tortillas
- 1 tomato, diced
- 1/4 cup shredded lettuce
- 1/4 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 1/4 cup salsa

Directions:

1. Saute chicken in a medium saucepan over medium high heat for about 20 minutes. Add vinegar, lime juice, sugar, salt, pepper, green onion, garlic and oregano. Simmer for an extra 10 minutes.
2. Heat an iron skillet over medium heat. Place a tortilla in the pan, warm, and turn over to heat the other side. Repeat with remaining tortillas. Serve lime chicken mixture in warm tortillas topped with tomato, lettuce, cheese and salsa.

recipe courtesy allrecipes.com

Understanding Humidity *(continued from cover)*

into contact with the cold surface, the air gets cooler, and the RH increases. If the surface is cold enough, RH reaches 100%. Since the air can no longer hold all of the water vapor condensation forms on the surface of the cooler material. We call this the dewpoint temperature.

If you have a basement, sunroom or unfinished area that is sometimes cooler than the rest of your house, temperature variations can lead to excessive relative humidity, condensation and all of the associated problems. In these areas it may be necessary to use a

dehumidifier to control moisture in the air. Remember, if the air is damp so is the structure. Keeping humidity under control is one step toward making your home a healthier place to live.

High humidity is a sign that something is wrong with a structure. If you suspect you have any kind of water damage from a leak, condensation, poor construction or foundation issues, call Professional Carpet Systems today. We can help identify the problem, prevent further damage and assist you in finding the right solution.

Getting Enough ZZZs

Good rest is a cornerstone of good health. Numerous studies have shown the health benefits of adequate sleep. A chronic state of fatigue can result in more accidents, impairment in attention and reasoning, an increased risk of heart disease and high blood pressure, and increased healing time from injury or illness.

As far as knowing how much sleep you need, there is no magic number. Different age groups need different amounts of sleep, but even within age groups, each person's needs are individual. Research has shown that adults who get around seven hours of sleep have the best long-term health outcomes.

To increase your chances of getting a good night's sleep, try to keep a regular schedule. Going to bed at the same time each night and rising in the morning at the same time helps your body know when to sleep and when to be awake. If you are feeling sleep-deprived, it is better to take a short afternoon nap than to sleep in late the next morning.

Melatonin is a naturally-occurring hormone that helps regulate sleep. Its production can be altered if your day is spent out of sync with the



natural changes in daily light. If you spend much of the day in an office away from natural light and then spend your evenings in front of a TV or computer screen, your body may not be producing melatonin correctly. To help correct this, try to get periods of natural sunlight during the day. At night, turn off artificial light from televisions and computers earlier in the evening.

If you've tried to get better sleep, but often feel tired during the day, it may be time for some help. A doctor that specializes in sleep disorders can offer natural and medication-based strategies to help you get some needed rest.

Cutting the Cost of Vet Care

Every good pet owner wants to provide the best care for their animal companion. But veterinary costs can add up, making it hard to afford quality care. There are some ways to keep costs down while making sure your beloved pet is taken care of. These tips can help save you money on your pet's health care.

Get regular check-ups. Don't skip your pet's annual exam in order to save money. It can end up costing you in the long run. Yearly exams are a great way to detect problems early instead of waiting for big problems to show up. You will also be giving your pet preventative care instead of only treating illnesses when they happen, which can be costly.

Feed your pet well. High-quality pet food can be more expensive, but will help keep your pet healthier throughout his or her life. This can save you money on health care costs. Also be sure to avoid overfeeding your pet. Not only



is this wasting money, but it can cause obesity which can then lead to health problems.

Spay or neuter your pet. There are long-term benefits to spaying and neutering your pet, including a decrease in the risk of uterine, ovarian, and testicular cancer. Many local shelters offer low-cost or even free spay and neuter services. Call your local shelter to find out if you qualify for reduced-cost services.

Consider pet insurance. Finally, if you know that treating your pet's injuries or illnesses would be a financial hardship, you should consider purchasing pet insurance. Getting this coverage when your pet is healthy will ensure that you are better able to meet your pet's health care needs in the future.

Does Working Longer Help Your Brain?

While most people dread having to put off retirement, there may be a silver lining to working longer in life. Researchers at the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research took a look at the health records of almost 500,000 self-employed workers. They found that there was a three percent reduction in the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease for each extra year worked after the age of traditional retirement.

Researchers have long known that there are several lifestyle factors that can reduce the risk of dementia. Those include a heart-healthy diet, exercise, social engagement, and mental activities. They now believe that staying in the workforce can be added to this list.

Americans are slowly moving toward a later retirement age for many reasons. In a survey of 1,000 Americans, about one-third said they planned on working until age 80 to provide for a comfortable retirement. This may seem to be a reluctant choice for many, but this new study gives some added incentive to those contemplating retiring later.



Good Clean Funnies

Reaching the end of a job interview, the Human Resources Officer asks a young engineer fresh out of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "And what starting salary are you looking for?" The engineer replies, "In the region of \$125,000 a year, depending on the benefits package." The interviewer inquires, "Well, what would you say to a package of five weeks vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, company matching retirement fund to 50% of salary, and a company car leased every two years, say, a red Corvette?" The engineer sits up straight and says, "Wow! Are you kidding?" The interviewer replies, "Yeah, but you started it."



Quick Tips

Car Tip

You will find it handy to keep an old blanket in your vehicle. You can use it in your trunk or cargo area when hauling dirty items. You can also use it to protect your roof's finish if you are placing something on your roof rack. If you need to change a tire, you can lay it down to protect your clothing from mud or road grime.

Organizing Tip

If you'd like to increase your bike use, consider purchasing a bike trailer. While designed mainly to haul kids around with you, a bike trailer can also be used to bring home groceries, garden supplies, take-out food, small furniture, library books, or anything that can easily fit into the trailer compartment.

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Win a \$25 Restaurant Gift Card!

Read this edition of Healthy, Wealthy & Wise to find the answer to the following trivia question:

Which of the following statements is true:

- a. The best humidity range for health and comfort is around 15%
- b. High humidity indoors is always caused by outdoor conditions
- c. Sticking doors are a possible sign of excessive humidity
- d. Condensation occurs on surfaces at the saturation temperature

Once you've found the correct answer, email it to anna@pcssuperior.com. At the end of the month, we will draw from the correct answers and someone will win a \$25 restaurant gift card!

Contest Expires 8/31/2017.



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