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Simple ways to freshen up that stuffy bathroom or kitchen

(BPT) - If there's one room in the house that cries out for fresh air, it's the kitchen. And if there's a second room that can benefit from Mother Nature's sweet breath, it's the bathroom. When humidity and odors build up in a room, a host of disagreeable results arises, from mold and mildew to dank, unpleasant air.

Exhausting stale indoor air and replacing it with fresh outside air is the best way to ensure continuous indoor air quality, the Home Ventilating Institute says. Modern construction, however, makes it virtually impossible to achieve sufficient exchange of air without mechanical assistance. Fortunately, from venting skylights to high-tech exhaust fans, there are plenty of ways to ensure ventilation in the kitchen and bath without sacrificing a comfortable atmosphere.

Become a fan of fans

Few rooms are as prone to moisture buildup as the bathroom. Since this room is often also one of the most-used in any home, keeping it fresh and comfortable can be a challenge. Venting fans are a must for full bathrooms where bathing occurs, and a comfort-enhancing plus in half baths and powder rooms.

If your bathroom lacks an exhaust fan, installing one is often within the abilities of a savvy do-it-yourselfer. It's important for your fan to vent outdoors. "Exhaust" fans that do not vent outdoors simply recirculate stale, damp air within the room, or shunt it to another area of the home - such as the attic - where moisture can lead to mildew. Consider installing a timer to help ensure your fan runs for an adequate amount of time after every shower or bath.

Skylighten up your life

Thanks to resources like Energy.gov, you may already know that a properly installed, energy-efficient skylight can help you control heating, cooling and lighting costs. Skylights can also be an excellent source of passive ventilation.

"Solar-powered fresh air skylights with a no-leak warranty admit healthful natural light while providing passive ventilation," says Ross Vandermark of VELUX America, makers of Energy Star-qualified skylights. "Passive ventilation gives homeowners the benefit of fresh air without adding to their utility bills. A skylight doesn't need to draw electricity to move air the way a venting fan does. What's more, skylights can be equipped with solar blinds for additional light control and energy efficiency. And when a homeowner chooses both a solar-powered fresh air skylight and solar-powered blind, both the products and the installation may be eligible for a 30 percent federal tax credit as a green home improvement."

Venting skylights in kitchens passively exhaust hot air, moisture and odors while admitting additional light for more pleasant cooking, dining and entertaining. And skylights, along with fashionable accessories including blinds, can be controlled manually or by remote control.

The same applies in baths, where humidity levels are often high and the need for ventilation is constant. Skylights also add a big plus in baths with the privacy they afford as opposed to vertical windows. The same holds true in bedrooms. Plus, gazing at the nighttime sky from your bed is sometimes a nice option.

Win with windows

Cold weather makes most of us close windows tight until temperatures warm. But as soon as the cold breaks, windows again become a great way to welcome fresh air into our homes.

It's possible to maximize the benefit your home receives from opening the windows. Whenever possible, create a cross-breeze by opening windows on opposite sides of the room or opposite ends of the house. Having two open windows will help maximize air flow.

Avoid blocking windows with furniture or heavy drapes that can block the movement of air. Ensure windows always have screens and keep screens clean and free of debris. Screens should always have locks, especially on second and third-floor windows and in homes where small children and pets are present.

For information on natural light and fresh air through passive ventilation, visit veluxusa.com. You'll also find a skylight planner app on the site for iPhone, iPad, and Android devices that allows homeowners to see exactly how various skylight and blind combinations would look in their own homes. For window and skylight energy efficiency information, visit energystar.gov, nrgc.org, or efficientwindows.org.

ARTICLE IMAGE(S)



Caption



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