



## How to choose a humidifier

A dry house makes the nose work harder. The nose is a natural humidifier but it will be healthier if the air is moist (30-35% humidity). The air is particularly dry during the winter because the low temperature does not allow the air to hold moisture. The dryness is made worse when the house has to be heated. Unfortunately, simply opening the window or placing a pan of water on a radiator is not enough.

If your heating system does not have an on-line humidifier, then you need to learn about freestanding humidifiers. They come as large console units or smaller, more portable units. They have features, such as adjustable fan speeds, humidistats which measure and adjust the moisture and automatic shutoffs in case the unit tips or the tank empties.

Humidifiers produce either a cool or warm mist.

### Cool mist humidifiers:

- Ultrasonic models use vibration to dispense
- Impellers produce a cool mist using a high-speed rotating disk.
- Evaporator units use a fan to blow air through a moist absorbent material, such as a filter, to produce moisture.

### Warm mist humidifiers:

- A steam vaporizer heats water with an electric element.
- A warm-mist humidifier is a kind of steam vaporizer, except that it produces a cooled steam.

While ultrasonic and impeller humidifiers are relatively quiet and avoid the danger of a hot mechanical element, they require constant cleaning to prevent mold and bacteria from growing. More expensive models come with an ultraviolet light which kills bacteria. Others come with a replaceable mineral filter. Evaporative humidifiers and steam vaporizers introduce fewer pollutants into the air, but use more electricity than cool mist humidifiers.

**Capacity.** This is measured by how many gallons of water are released into the air in 24 hours. To determine the capacity that you need, calculate the volume of the room... multiplying the total floor area in square feet by the ceiling height. If that total comes to 500, a 1.5 or 2 gallon capacity is suitable. For a total of 2,000, a capacity of 10 or more gallons is required.

**The Goal.** Humidifiers should produce moisture levels 35-40%. Higher levels can encourage mold (mildew) growth. Use a hygrometer (inexpensive and available in hardware stores, RadioShack or online) to check the humidity level. If you want to bother with only one humidifier, place it in your bedroom where you spend the greatest portion of every day.