

Summer Energy Savings

Beat the Heat — and Your Air Conditioning Bill — This Summer

Did you know that, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Americans spend about \$11 billion each year on air conditioning? That might not be such a surprise if you're the one who writes the check for your household energy bill every month.

Believe it or not, you can spend less on cooling costs while still keeping cool. Here are five things to do before you reach to adjust the thermostat:

- 1. Make sure your house isn't part of the problem.** If your home isn't insulated and sealed well, warm air could be leaking in, sabotaging your efforts to cool things down. Make sure all cracks and openings are sealed, along with your ducts. The DOE says air loss through ducts can account for 30 percent of the energy a cooling system uses.
- 2. Keep that breeze flowing.** Natural ventilation is a great way to decrease the temperature in your home without using any energy. Open windows in the mornings or evenings when the air is cool and get a cross-breeze going throughout the house.
- 3. Check that the heat isn't on.** You might be heating your house in the summer without realizing it. How? by using the oven, stove or other appliances that generate heat. Cook outside whenever you can, and use the dishwasher and clothes dryer at cooler times of the day if possible.
- 4. Create your own personal cool zone.** Cooling the whole house might not be necessary if you're only using a few rooms. Set up fans (ceiling fans will allow you to set your thermostat a few degrees higher), drink plenty of cool liquids and eat cold foods, which can help lower your body temperature. You might even consider wearing a damp shirt to stay comfortable or putting an ice pack on your forehead, the back of your neck or your wrists.
- 5. Don't forget the basics.** When it's sunny outside, keep your curtains closed. Minimize your use of lights, as they generate heat. And, when the outside air is warmer than the air in your house, close the windows to keep the cool air in.

We can't promise these tips will keep you just as cool as when you kick back and turn on the AC full-blast. But saving money every month? That's pretty cool, too.