

What You Need to Know About

# Air Duct Cleaning



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# Why Should You Get Your Air Ducts Cleaned?

## Answer: Because they get dirty!

In addition to normal accumulations of dust and dirt found in all homes through regular use, there are several other factors that can increase the need for air duct cleaning:

- Pets
- Occupants with allergies or asthma
- Cigarette or cigar smoke
- Water contamination or damage to the home / HVAC system
- Home renovation or remodeling projects

Some occupants are more sensitive to these contaminants than others. Allergy and asthma sufferers, as well as young children and the elderly tend to be more susceptible to the types of poor indoor air quality that air duct cleaning can help to address.

### INSPECT YOUR AIR DUCTS

You can tell if your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system needs cleaning by one of two ways. First, with a screwdriver, remove a floor or wall register. Then,

- 1 Use a small mirror and flashlight -or-
- 2 Use a digital camera to take a picture inside the duct

**If there is visible dust, dirt or debris, you should have your ducts cleaned.**



### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DUCT CLEANING

Air duct cleaning is a misnomer. In actuality, the entire HVAC system should be cleaned. Failure to clean all components of the system can result in re-contamination of the entire system, thus minimizing the benefits of cleaning.

Just as you wouldn't only clean half of your living room floor, you also would not want to clean only part of your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system. NADCA recommends cleaning the entire HVAC system, including the following components:

- Air ducts
- Coils
- Drain pan
- Registers
- Grills
- Air plenum
- Blower motor and assembly
- Heat exchanger
- Air Filter
- Air Cleaner

# NADCA

# NADCA Members Follow A Higher Standard

A company must meet stringent requirements in order to be a member of NADCA. The company must:

- Have at least one NADCA certified Air Systems Cleaning Specialist (ASCS) on staff
- Maintain at least \$500,000 in general liability insurance
- Agree to clean according to NADCA's standards and comply with NADCA's Code of Ethics. If a company is not going to clean according to NADCA's standards, this must be communicated to the buyer at the time of sale.

These requirements were established to provide a higher level of assurance to consumers. Visit [www.nadca.com](http://www.nadca.com) to locate a NADCA member in your area.



## Proper HVAC Cleaning Process

There are two key components to HVAC cleaning: breaking contaminants loose, and collection of contaminants.

### BREAKING CONTAMINANTS LOOSE

Properly cleaning HVAC systems requires removing the sources of contamination. Source removal begins with use of one or more agitation devices designed to loosen contaminants from the surfaces within the heating and air-conditioning system. Examples of agitation devices include brushes, air whips, and compressed air nozzles or "skipper balls." Agitation can also be achieved through hand-brushing or contact vacuuming.



### COLLECTION OF CONTAMINANTS

During cleaning, the entire HVAC system is placed under continuous negative pressure (vacuum) to prevent the spread of contaminants. Continuous negative pressure allows very fine particles to be removed from the system as they become airborne, ensuring that these particles are not released into the living space when the system is turned on after cleaning.

This negative pressure also serves to extract the loosened contaminants, which are collected and removed from your home.



## SYSTEM ACCESS

HVAC system cleaning is not a complex process, but each job is unique. Where possible, access to duct interiors should be made through existing openings such as supply diffusers, return grills, duct end caps, and existing service openings. Cleaning technicians may need to cut access holes in the duct work in order to reach inside with various cleaning tools. Creation of these service openings, and their subsequent closure, requires craftsmanship and professional skills.

## EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

There is a wide variety of equipment available to HVAC cleaning professionals. Both truck-mounted and portable vacuums can be used to stop the spread of contaminants and get the system cleaned to the NADCA Standard.

## ANTIMICROBIAL CHEMICALS

Antimicrobial chemicals include sanitizers, disinfectants and deodorizers that can be applied to non-porous surfaces in HVAC systems to address microbial contamination and help control odors. Only chemicals registered with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can be used. These products should only be considered after mechanical surface cleaning has been performed and if the need for such treatment has been deemed necessary.

## NADCA Members provide a higher level of assurance to consumers.

Following, are tips to help you find a qualified contractor:

- Got to the NADCA Web site at [www.nadca.com](http://www.nadca.com) and enter your zip (postal) code to find a NADCA member in your area.
- When speaking to a contractor, make sure they can show proof of NADCA membership and certification.
- Make sure the contractor will conduct a thorough inspection of your HVAC system and alert you to any problems.
- Make sure the contractor will clean all of the HVAC system components including, at a minimum: air ducts, coils, drain, registers, grills, air plenum, blower motor and assembly, heat exchanger, air filter, and air cleaner.

# Finding A Qualified

# Contractor

## SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

There are a few things that you can do to maintain the cleanliness and efficiency of your HVAC system:

- Get good filters—ask your contractor for a recommendation.
- Clean/change the filters as needed (at least every two months).
- Even with properly cleaning and changing quality filters, the HVAC system will still become dirty over time. Have your system inspected every two years to determine whether your system needs to be cleaned again.

## COST AND TIME ESTIMATES

There are several factors that affect cost and time estimates:

- There are several factors that affect cost and time estimates: type of ductwork, size of the system, system accessibility, the number of crew members, level of contamination, and even environmental factors. Properly cleaning an HVAC system in an average-sized home may cost upward of \$1000 USD.
- Beware of advertisements that have “whole house specials” for very low prices. Many of them only include the main ducts and charge extra for the air handler, blower fans, coils, registers and cutting access. Upon arrival many of these companies then up-charge to excessive amounts.