How Often Should You Change Your Furnace Filter? (And Keep Your Home Safe)

By Michael J. O'Connor • Reviewed by Ben • **Updated:** November 27, 2023 Heating / Heaters

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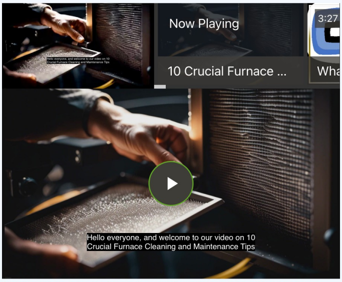
Your home’s furnace must be in good working order to be safe and effective.



Hello everyone, and welcome to our video on 10 Crucial Furnace Cleaning and Maintenance Tips

10 Crucial Furnace Cleaning and Maintenance Tips: Ensure ...

There are numerous components in a heater furnace, but the filter is one of its most important. The filter keeps particles of dust and debris out of the furnace and ensures that the air going in and out is clean.

To keep your furnace running smoothly, you must regularly replace the filter. For the most part, **you should replace your filter between once a month and once a year.**

10 Crucial Furnace Cleaning and Ma...
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Knowing how often to change your specific furnace filter will help you stay on top of it and protect yourself and your home.

Depending on the size of your filters, there are different intervals between replacements. If you are looking for a quick answer, they are:

- **One- to Two-Inch Filters –** Every one to three months
- **Three- to Four-Inch Filters –** Every six to nine months

- **Five- to Six-Inch Filters –** Every nine months to one year

Why Change a Furnace Filter?

Your home's furnace uses electric or gas heating elements to warm up the air pulled in through the intake. If this air has contaminants or debris, such as dust or other particles, it can clog the intake or even start a fire.

That's why the furnace filter is such an important component.

As you use your heater, the furnace filter will catch all those contaminants and keep them out of the furnace. However, after a while, the filter will start to fill up with dust and debris and become clogged. This makes the furnace work harder to take in air, which can cause all kinds of efficiency issues.

In my experience, **changing your furnace filter is your best bet if you want to prolong the life of your furnace**. It will prevent safety issues like fires and overheating and make your heating system more efficient and cheaper to run.

What Determines How Often to Change a Furnace Filter?

Every furnace is different, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to how often to change a furnace filter. I have found that certain factors will determine the best interval for your particular furnace.

Depending on your family, the size of your home, and the type of furnace filter you have, your needs will change.

Understanding these factors and how they affect your furnace filter will help you find the right schedule.

Filter Size

The size of the filters in your furnace plays a major part in how often to change a furnace filter. Furnace filters come in various thicknesses, all of which will be different depending on your furnace.

The thicker your filter is, the longer it can go without a replacement

Thicker filters are less likely to let contaminants into the furnace intake. If, however, your furnace filter is thin, it will become dirty and clogged faster, and you will need to replace it more often.

Household Size

The number of people living in your home will be incredibly important when deciding how often to change a furnace filter.

Larger households produce more dust and dirt in the air. People coming and going and letting in contaminants can reduce air quality and clog your furnace filter faster.

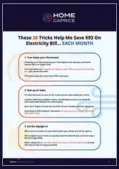
A single person in a home may not have to change a furnace filter as often as a large family. Taking the filter out at varying intervals and looking at its condition will help you decide when the time comes.

Pets

If you have pets, you will most likely have to change your furnace filter more often.

Pets produce dander and shed hair, which can clog your furnace filter. Plus, they get dirty when they go outside, and that dirt will get in the air when they come back inside the house.

The more pets you have, the more often you must change your filter. Also, if your pets are indoor and outdoor animals, this will reduce the time between furnace filter replacements.



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How Often to Change a Furnace Filter?

While many factors go into how often to change a furnace filter, there are some good rules of thumb to go by.

On top of considering your household and the people living there, check your owner's manual. It will have guidelines for time periods between replacements. The manual will also tell you what size filters the furnace takes and what type you should use.

Abiding by your furnace's guidelines as well as my recommended intervals, will keep your furnace running smoothly for many years to come.

One- to Two-Inch Filters

Smaller furnaces with one- to two-inch filters need replacements **every one to three months.**

When you spend more time outside in the summer and spring, this interval may be even shorter. You will be bringing more contaminants inside the house, which can clog the filters faster.

Three- to Four-Inch Filters

If your furnace uses three- to four-inch filters, you should change it **every six to nine months.**

Since more material is in these thicker filters, they have more space to catch contaminants. This increases their lifespan and keeps them working much longer than smaller filters.

Five- to Six-Inch Filters

The largest home furnaces have five- to six-inch filters, which can go **nine months to one year** without a replacement.

However, I always suggest you take the filter out and visually inspect it every few months. This will tell you whether or not it is exceptionally dirty and should be replaced.

It is always better to err on the side of caution when replacing filters.

While it may cost a little more to replace them earlier, it will still be cheaper than paying higher energy bills or replacing a damaged furnace.

Hey there! I am Benas, the founder and content editor at Home Caprice. Thanks for reading the article. I hope you were able to find what you were looking for. I and my team are here to simplify heating and cooling for everyone. Please have a look at the About page for more details about our website and feel free to check out our editorial process.

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