

Why you should clean your light bulbs

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I can see clearly now the grime is gone. The obstacle blocking my vision was a filthy light fixture in the kitchen.

With Premier Dalton McGuinty warning Ontarians that [electricity prices are rising](#) now is a good time to check that bulbs are operating at maximum effectiveness. Toronto Hydro says dirt can absorb as much as [50 per cent of a bulb's light](#). In my house, I'm guessing that it was over 60 per cent.

The light was so dim I was about to call an electrician to install another set of lights. Before I made the call, I realized I should check the compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) in my light fixture to see if they were working properly.

Four years after installing fluorescent bulbs in my house, they were still shining brightly. The trouble was that I hadn't bothered to clean the light fixtures or the bulbs. We dusted the bulbs and gave the fixture a quick wash in the sink, and now it's so bright it now feels like an operating theatre, and that's with 60 watt bulbs.

In the "old" days, when incandescent lights died on a regular basis, they didn't get a chance to get dusty. Fixtures were taken down, washed, new bulbs inserted, and then reinstalled.

Once I realized that sloth was keeping me blind, I enlisted the family in helping me take down every fixture in the house. In the bathroom, I found out that there are three bulbs, not two.

Lack of cleanliness was costing us money and sight. When I couldn't see properly in the kitchen, I was turning on every conceivable light – the under-counter lighting, the stove light, and two task lights – to aid my vision. Since I went on the cleaning binge, the main light fixture provides all the light I need. I'll be comparing next month's hydro bill to previous bills to see if there's reduced demand and money.

Compact fluorescent lights use about 75 per cent less energy and last 10 times longer than the standard incandescent bulb. Each bulb can also save more than \$40 in electricity costs over its lifetime

Just remember to dispose of them where you bought them. They contain a tiny amount of mercury which is a hazardous product.

I bought new CFLs this weekend that are supposed to last 11 years. That's a long time between cleanings. To stave off another bout of grime-encrusted blindness, my family will be cleaning fixtures every time daylight savings starts and ends. That should keep the home fires twinkling.