

Water Heaters -- Frequently Asked Questions (Home Depot)

WATER HEATERS

Q: What factors should I consider when choosing a new water heater?

A: Consider fuel source (gas or electric), storage capacity (30 gallon to 80 gallon available), tank type (tank or tankless), and warranty (The Home Depot offers 6-year, 9-year and 12-year warranties.)

Q: Do I have an option of what type of unit I purchase?

A: You have many options. We carry a variety of GE-branded traditional tank water heaters in capacities that range from 30 gallons to 80 gallons in a variety of fuel sources (gas, electric, liquid propane). We also offer a wide selection of Rheem gas and electric tankless water heaters. Our authorized service provider can review all available options with you and help you select the best system to fit your budget and need.

Q: What's included in a basic installation?

A: A basic installation consists of the following tasks:

- Delivery of new water heater to your home. Delivery charges could apply for units that are further than 30 miles from a Home Depot store location.
- Disconnection of existing unit
- Installation of new water heater of the same size, installed in the same unobstructed area and reconnection of existing gas, electric, water and venting lines.
- Up to 5 feet of discharge tube, gas and/or water pipe as needed to complete install
- Conversion of water or gas lines from flex to solid pipe up to 5 feet if needed to complete install
- Provision of nipples, couplings and copper tubing for direct reconnect
- Testing of new water heater to insure proper operation
- Final clean up of job site and walk-through with customer
- Haul away of existing unit for disposal (excluding stone-lined water heaters)

Q: What do I do in case of an emergency?

A: In case of emergency:

1. Turn off the gas or electric water heater: For gas, turn the dial on top of the thermostat from the "on" position to the "off" position. For electric, turn off the power supply to the water heater at the appliance or circuit breaker.

2. Turn off the water supply. The knob is located at the top of the unit.

3. Drain water heater (if necessary). Attach a hose to the drain faucet near the bottom of the unit and run the other end of the hose to a lower location where hot water will not cause damage. Then, open the hot water side of the faucet.

Q: How do I know if I need a new water heater?

A: There are several signs that may indicate your water heater might be failing:

- Water buildup in or around the area of your water heater may suggest a leak.
- Water-quality issues, such as rust or sediment visible in your water supply, could indicate the unit may fail soon..
- The unit no longer provides the same temperature or duration of hot water as it had in the past.

Q: What's the difference between gas and electric?

A: Gas usually costs less to operate, but is a slightly larger upfront investment and less efficient. Electric costs more to operate but is more efficient and offers higher energy-factor ratings.

Q: What's the difference between a conventional storage tank and a tankless one?

A: A conventional tank constantly heats stored water, is good for high usage demands and economical. It can be stored in a closet, basement or garage and has a capacity ranging from 20 to 80 gallons. A tankless water heater has lower operating costs, uses less space and can reduce energy consumption by as much as 30%. It also can provide continuous hot water at a precise temperature. However, it does require more up front investment, may need venting and is not ideal for heavy usage.

Q: Can I get a price without an in-home consultation?

A: Most authorized service provider will provide a quote over the phone and approximate the total cost of the job. However, the provider will conduct an on-site inspection to ensure the installation meets local code. Additional charges may apply. Final charges will be reviewed with you and no work will begin until your approval is given.

Q: What is a permit and why do I need it?

A: Permits are governed by local cities and municipalities and required to ensure that a local plumbing inspector is dispatched to the site as a third party to review the workmanship of the installer. This is meant to ensure that the install has been executed

safely and in line with local city and state plumbing codes and ensures that the quality of workmanship by our licensed professional installers meets plumbing standards.

Q: Do water heaters require permits?

A: Permits are required on most water heater installs and pricing varies by state, city and municipality. Our installation professionals can review the permit process and pricing with you and answer any questions you have.

Q: What if I have purchased a water heater already and just need it installed?

A: No problem. We will install any water heater.

Q: How long can I expect my water heater to last?

A: Depending on what model you purchase -- each carries a manufacturer warranty with it. Please reference the product materials that came with your unit.

Q: What are some additional water heater features to consider?

A: Depending on your needs, inquire about self-cleaning units, product efficiency ratings, first-hour hot water delivery and recovery time, and automatic shut off valves. Self-cleaning units automatically fight lime and sediment buildup to lengthen tank life and maintain peak efficiency for a longer period of time. Recovery speed is the amount of time it takes to heat a full tank of water. If you tend to use a lot of hot water, look for a model with a fast recovery speed. An automatic shutoff valve helps prevent fires by shutting off the flow of gas is there's movement in the ground or the gas flow experiences a sudden, sizeable increase.

Q: What is the best way to protect my investment and insure a longer life for my water heater?

A: You should flush your water heater once per year to help remove any sediment or rust that may be building up. This will greatly increase the life of your water heater and can even extend it beyond the manufacturer's warranty timeframe.

Q: How may I protect my investment after expiration of my full in-home warranty?

A: All of the water heaters products sold carry a manufacturer's warranty. Warranties vary by product ,so make sure to reference the materials that come with your unit. This manufacturer's warranty covers any defective parts that may occur within a specific timeframe.

Q: Can I install a water heater myself?

A: It is recommended that you use a licensed, professional installer as the installation of a water heater deals with carbon monoxide, natural gas and a pressure-controlled

holding tank. Any one of these factors could cause catastrophic damage and/or injury if the unit is not installed properly. Be sure to use a trained professional who knows the necessary codes and safety factors.

WATER HEATER REPAIR

Q: How do I know if I need to repair -- rather than replace -- my water heater?

A: It often comes down to the age and overall condition of the existing water heater. If the water heater is within a couple of years (2 years) of its manufacturer warranty period, we recommend that it be replaced rather than repaired. However, if you cannot afford a full replacement, a repair provides a lower-cost solution that extends the life of your water heater, deferring the replacement expense.

Q: What are common symptoms / problems that require professional repair?

A: While a leak from the tank vessel will always indicate a need for replacement (we will not conduct repair work on these tanks), attached accessories that are leaking -- such as valves, flex hose, cpvc and copper lines -- may be repairable.

Other common symptoms of a failing water heater:

- **Water won't get as hot as it used to** (This may be related to gas valve issues, heating elements, burner assembly, dip tube, pilot light being out, settings have changed.)
- **Limited duration of hot water** (Same issues as listed above.)
- **Pilot light not working**
- **Smell of gas near the water heater** (This may be because of a defective burner or thermocouple.) **If you notice the smell of gas, immediately shut off the gas supply and call for service/replacement.**
- **Rust/sediment in the water** (This is generally a sign of corroding tank and can be flushed.)
- **Small plastic pieces in water coming from faucets** (This is generally a sign of the dip tube degrading.)
- **Foul smell coming from the unit** (This is generally due to well water and may be eliminated by inserting a chlorine-treated anode rod into the tank or flushing the tank with chlorine. **Water treatment** may be a preferred option.)
- **Unit is leaking from the top or side** (This may be a problem with the pressure and temperature valve, flex line or connections or the pipes to or from the heater.)
- **Banging in the pipes** (This is often because of increased pressure in the system. It may be fixed with the installation of a PRV, or pressure reducing valve.)
- **Noisy water heater** (This may be related to the burner assembly, upper/lower heating elements or system pressure and valves.)

Q: Is there a fee for an in-home visit?

A: Yes. A flat diagnostic fee will be charged to have the installer come out and assess the situation. That cost will be applied to the final cost of the repair. If you decide to replace instead of repair, the diagnostic fee will be waived and you'll simply pay for the water heater installation.

Q: What's involved with an in-home visit?

A: After scheduling an appointment that includes an in-home consultation fee (trip charge), our professional installer will diagnose your water heater. The installer will review the findings and recommend any needed repairs, along with a final price. At that point, you'll have the choice to do one of the following:

- Accept or decline the repair (The diagnostic fee will still be charged for the trip.)
- Upgrade to a replacement (The diagnostic fee then would be applied toward the full replacement install.)

Q: Can the repair work be done the same day as the assessment/diagnostic?

A: Repair work (or a replacement) can be executed the same day in most circumstances. You will work with the provider to determine whether or not same-day repairs are an option. The diagnosis and repair should not take more than 1-2 hours.

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TANKLESS WATER HEATERS**Q: What is a tankless water heater?**

A: Tankless water heaters raise cold water to the temperature you've digitally set when your demand for water passes either a gas burner or electric element. While a conventional tank-style water heater stores hot water and heats it 24/7 whether you use it or not, a compact tankless water heater only heats water on demand, making it more energy efficient.

Q: What are the benefits of a tankless water heater and how does it differ from a traditional unit?

A: A tankless water heater has lower operating costs, uses less space and can reduce energy consumption by as much as 30-40%. It also can provide continuous hot water at a precise temperature. However, it does require more up front investment, may need venting and is not ideal for heavy usage. A conventional tank constantly heats stored

water, is good for high usage demands and economical. It can be stored in a closet, basement or garage and has a capacity ranging from 20 to 80 gallons.

Q: How much more do tankless water heaters cost to purchase?

A: Generally, a tankless water heater will cost about 2 to 2-1/2 times as much as a standard water heater to purchase and install. Factored into that price are the higher production cost for the unit, venting and the gas line/gas meter resizing required to support the unit's demands. However, you'll have lower operating costs, more useable square footage and may be eligible for federal or local tax incentives and credits.

Q: Can a tankless unit be installed in the same place as my old water heater?

A: As long as enough combustion air is provided, tankless water heaters can be installed in a utility room, garage, basement, attic, or placed on an outside wall. Plus, they may be installed in locations where a storage water heater may not fit. The digital temperature controller may be mounted in any room.

Q: How much may I expect to save on my monthly bill if I install a tankless water heater?

A: Test results have shown that a tankless gas water heater costs about 30-40% less to operate than an electric water heater and about 20-30% less than a natural gas water heater. **Note:** There is no guarantee that you will achieve these exact cost savings as many factors go into the efficiency of these units.

Q: Do tankless water heaters have lower operating costs?

A: The operating cost of the unit depends heavily on your usage and behavior. Tankless units carry a much higher Energy Factor, meaning a larger percentage of the energy you use will be directly transferred to heating your water. A tankless water heater has no standing pilot light, no standby loss and burners that modulate to maintain maximum efficiency. So if you have exactly the same water usage behavior (duration of shower, amount of applications using the unit, usage at the same time of day), a tankless will have a lower operating cost.

Q: Can I install a water heater myself?

A: It is recommended that you use a licensed, professional installer as the installation of a water heater deals with carbon monoxide, natural gas and a pressure-controlled holding tank. Any one of these factors could cause catastrophic damage and/or injury if the unit is not installed properly. Be sure to use a trained professional who knows the necessary codes and safety factors.

Q: How do I ensure that I select the right-sized tankless water heater for my home?

A: The licensed professional installers will ensure that the tankless unit you select will appropriately support your needs.

Q: Is there a standing pilot?

A: No, the direct ignition sends a spark to the main burner when hot water flow is detected. This feature improves the energy efficiency of the water heater.

Q: Can I convert the water heater from liquid propane to natural gas or natural gas to liquid propane?

A: No, these units cannot be converted from one fuel source to another.

Q: Where in my home can I install a tankless water heater?

A: Depending on the model, a tankless water heater may be installed in all locations, including bedrooms and bathrooms. However, any location will require access for combustion air from outdoors. Such models are not designed for use in mobile homes. Outdoor models are a great alternative if your climate is appropriate, saving both space and the cost of venting.

WARRANTIES & EXTENDED SERVICE AGREEMENTS ARE RECOMMENDED