



When Should You Install a Ductless Air Conditioner

What's the difference?

Air conditioners provide cool air through two forms of delivery: ducted or ductless systems. The majority of homes in the U.S. are built with air ducts made from sheet metal that run from the main air conditioning unit to each room in the house. The ducts are hidden in walls and air is delivered to each room through vents. In ductless systems, the refrigerant from the outdoor condensing unit is sent directly to an air handler located on the wall or ceiling of a particular room.

While a ductless system can have several benefits, many homeowners with existing ductwork will be better off from a financial and comfort perspective by using a ducted system. The benefits and concerns of a ductless system are:

Benefits of Ductless

- Easy for a contractor to install (no ductwork)
- Some flexibility in location of air handler
- Ability to cool the home by specific zones
- Quiet when operating

Concerns with Ductless

- Reduced overall indoor air circulation and increased humidity can lead to comfort and air quality problems
- Appearance of the air handler on a wall or ceiling in each room
- Higher cost of ownership for a whole-home solution if your home already has central AC
- Serviceability and ease of repairs

While we don't recommend a ductless system for most homes, there are several situations where a ductless system should be considered over a traditional ducted one. These include:

- Room additions or adding cooling to a garage or work space
- Cooling smaller, older homes without existing ductwork
- When space is at a premium and ducts won't fit

The bottom line

Consider more than just up front pricing when making a decision. Your comfort, humidity and long-term reliability should all be factors in making a smart decision. As with any important HVAC question, it makes sense to talk with a professional. Contact a reputable licensed contractor who can explain the many options and variables when it comes to selecting the best solutions for your needs.