

How to be “Fridge” Frugal

Refrigerators use seven percent of the nation's electricity, the equivalent of more than 50 percent of the power generated by all U.S. nuclear power plants. Chances are your refrigerator is using more electricity than any other appliance in the kitchen and accounts for about 25% of your electric bill. Here are some ways to help you use it efficiently:

Refrigerator Coils

The condenser coils help it dissipate heat from the food compartment. When dust, dirt or pet hair collect on the coils, they don't work as efficiently and the refrigerator uses more energy to power the motor. This could cause the refrigerator to run continuously or it may stop completely as a result of an overheated compressor. Keep condenser coils clean and unobstructed for maximum energy savings.

At least once every six months carefully clean the condenser coils of your refrigerator using either a long handled brush or the crevice tool attachment of the vacuum cleaner. The coils are located either behind or beneath the refrigerator.

IMPORTANT: Before cleaning the condenser coils, unplug the refrigerator to avoid a shock hazard **AND** remember to plug in and turn on the refrigerator once you have finished.

To clean refrigerators with coils located underneath, remove the kick plate/grill at the floor on the front of the refrigerator by pulling on it firmly. Behind this grill dust covers the refrigerator coils, which extend back under the refrigerator. First use the



brush to loosen the dirt on the coils by rubbing it gently under the refrigerator and brushing back and forth until you can see the metal coils underneath the dirt. Using a vacuum cleaner attachment, vacuum up the resulting dust bunnies. Replace the grill when you're finished. Replacing the grill is usually easier if you open the refrigerator door so you can see the slots the grill fits into.



If you have coils under your refrigerator, don't forget to clean off the fan grill as well. This grill can be found behind the refrigerator. Slide the refrigerator out from the wall until you can squeeze in there with a vacuum cleaner attachment. Be careful not to scratch the floor under the refrigerator.

Some refrigerators have coils in the back. Slide the refrigerator carefully out from the wall until you can reach the coils. Clean coils completely with the vacuum cleaner's dusting attachment, then slide the refrigerator back into place.



Refrigerator coils are fragile! Be careful when cleaning or moving the refrigerator not to dent or damage them. Don't use a sharp instrument that might puncture the coils. Refrigerators are heavy, never tip one forward or backward, and do not attempt to move a refrigerator without help.

Gaskets

Check the gasket (rubber seal) around the door for cracks and dried-on food. To test the seal: close the door on a sheet of paper and try to pull the paper out. If it slides out easily, cold air is escaping from the compartment. Adjust or replace the seal.

More is Better

A full refrigerator uses less energy than an empty one. For efficient chilling, keep your refrigerator and freezer as full as possible, and remove things stored on top of it.

Energy Star

Consider replacing that old refrigerator. A refrigerator made before 1993 could be costing \$140 a year in electricity. Even those refrigerators built between 1993 and 2001 cost about \$60 a year to run. A new *Energy Star* rated model runs on about \$20 worth of electricity. A new refrigerator will last for decades and could pay for itself in less than five years.

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