

Annual maintenance checklist (extends AC life by 3 to 5 years)

1 Replace or check the air filter

Every 1 to 3 months during cooling season. A clogged filter freezes the evaporator coil and shortens compressor life.

2 Book a spring tune-up (\$100 to \$150)

Coil cleaning, refrigerant level check, capacitor and contactor test, lubrication of moving parts, electrical inspection.

3 Clear debris around the outdoor unit

Keep at least 60 cm of clearance on all sides. Remove leaves, grass, and snow buildup after winter.

4 Check the condensate drain line

A clogged drain causes water damage and humidity problems. Flush with diluted bleach once per season.

5 Test the thermostat before summer

Confirm cooling mode kicks in properly. Replace batteries in non-wired thermostats.

6 Inspect refrigerant lines for ice or oil stains

Ice on the lines or oily residue near fittings signals a refrigerant leak. Call a technician immediately.

7 Note any unusual sounds or smells

Grinding, rattling, or a burning smell are early warning signs. Catching them early prevents bigger repairs.

Repair vs replace quick reference

Age under 10 years	Repair if cost is under 40% of new system cost
Age 10 to 12 years	Get a replacement quote before authorizing major repairs
Age 12+ years	Replacement usually makes more financial sense
R-22 refrigerant	Replace - R-22 is phased out and costly to recharge
SEER under 13	Consider replacement for hydro savings (SEER2 18+ available)
New install cost (GTA)	\$3,500 to \$7,000 depending on brand, size, efficiency

Need help? NorthWind serves the GTA - free estimates on all AC and heat pump work.