

Water Heater Buying Guide



The life expectancy of a tank-type water heater is just 8-10 years. If your old unit is starting to show its age, now's the perfect time to plan ahead and let Dominion Energy North Carolina's natural gas experts help you find the right replacement. We've put together some simple questions to help you select the right natural gas water heater, and get it installed, before your showers turn cold!

Step 1

What type of water heater do I want?

There are two main types of natural gas water heaters: tank and tankless. Each type has its pros and cons.

TANK Water Heater

PROS

- Lower initial cost
- Can install inside or outside (if properly covered)
- Many models keep working even during a power outage

CONS

- Available hot water is limited by tank size
- Constantly heats and reheats the water in the tank, even when you aren't using it
- Average life expectancy is about 8-10 years
- Takes up a lot of floor space
- Limited installation options, i.e. you can't install one in a bathroom or bedroom

TANKLESS Water Heater

PROS

- Heats water on-demand. Only pay for hot water when you need it.
- Provides endless hot water
- Average life expectancy is 20 years or longer
- All parts are replaceable
- Small size (about the size of a carry-on suitcase)
- Can install inside or outside
- Precise temperature controls can prevent scalding
- Add a recirculating pump to get instant hot water at all of your faucets
- No pilot light for added efficiency

CONS

- Needs electricity to run
- Higher initial cost, but saves money in the long run (especially for larger families)

Step 2

How much hot water do I need?

Properly sizing your water heater is the most important decision you'll make because you need to make sure it can keep up with demand. Using the following information, our sales rep will help you make sure you get the right size water heater for your hot water needs:

- How many full and half bathrooms do you have?
- How many people live in your house?
- Do you frequently wash clothes or dishes when people are taking showers?
- Do you have a large soaker or jacuzzi tub?
- Do you have any unique hot water needs?

Step 3

Where do I want to install my water heater?

It's easier and cheaper to install your new water heater in the same location as your old water heater, but for one reason or another, you may want to change the location. If you want to change the location, here are some things to discuss with your sales rep:

- If having a tank full of water in your attic (or on the second floor) makes you nervous, maybe you should switch to a tankless unit, or consider putting your new tank water heater somewhere else.
- What venting requirements does your water heater need if it's installed inside?
- What are the pros and cons of installing the unit inside vs. outside?
- If your water heater requires electricity to run, is there electric wiring or a plug available at the install location, or will it need to be installed?
- If this is your first natural gas water heater, your installer will need to run a gas line.
- Does it make sense to install the water heater closer to the bathrooms or the kitchen?

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Step 4

What other factors should I consider?

Cost and Efficiency

While it's tempting to purchase the cheapest water heater you can find, those are usually the most expensive to operate because they aren't very efficient. A more efficient unit may cost a little more up front, but it will more than pay for the difference in lower operating costs.

A water heater's Energy Factor (EF) is an indication of how efficient it is

The higher the EF, the more efficient the unit is. Mid-range efficiency natural gas tank water heaters have an EF of between .58 and .62. Tankless units usually have an EF of .82 or higher.

Don't just look at tank size when selecting a tank water heater

You want your installer to have a long and positive track record for installing gas logs in your area. Ask for references and only use an installer from a company you trust. You want to make sure the installer you use will be around for many years to come so they can provide maintenance and repair for your logs if you need it.

Tankless water heaters may require a new gas meter

While most people select a tank water heater based on the size of its tank, it's actually the First-Hour Rating (FHR) that will tell you how much hot water it can supply in an hour. This number is printed on the yellow EnergyGuide label.

Tankless water heaters may require a new gas meter

Tankless water heaters have different gas requirements. As a result, you may need a different gas meter to handle the extra load. So make sure your meter size is checked before the install starts. There is no charge for the new meter, but only Dominion Energy can install it.

Tankless water heaters have unique installation requirements

Like the gas pressure and volume requirements mentioned above, tankless units have many other unique installation requirements including water pressure, cold water pipe size, electrical requirements, etc. To prevent disappointment down the road, our sales rep will need to visit your house to make sure a tankless water heater will function properly in your home.

Step 5

What do I look for when selecting an installer?

Are they Licensed, Bonded and Insured?

Installers should be licensed, bonded and insured to ensure they know what they are doing and have coverage to protect you and your home if something is damaged during the installation or someone gets injured. And, in most cases, if a licensed installer does not install your water heater, the warranty will be voided. In the case of Rinnai tankless water heaters, the installer must also be a certified Rinnai installer or the warranty will be voided.

Do they follow all building codes and pull the required permits?

When installing any type of water heater, if your installer does not follow building codes or fails to pull the proper permits, it puts you and your family at risk.

How long have they been in the business?

You want your installer to have a long and positive track record for installing water heaters in your area. If you are getting a tankless installed, the installer needs to have extensive tankless experience (and be Rinnai certified in you're installing a Rinnai). Ask for references and only use an installer from a company you trust. You want to make sure the installer you use will be around for many years to come so they can provide maintenance and repair for your water heater if you need it.

Will the installer dispose of the old water heater?

Some installers will not dispose of the old unit, while others will charge an extra disposal fee. Make sure you know what to expect up front, or you may end up having to pay someone else to dispose of the old water heater for you.

We offer installation and maintenance for all types of natural gas water heaters

Buy your next natural gas water heater and have it installed and maintained by the natural gas experts at Dominion Energy North Carolina. You can rest assured that your water heater will be installed by a licensed, bonded and insured professional who follows all building codes and pulls the required permits. Our installers are also Rinnai certified. We'll even dispose of your old water heater as part of the installation. From start to finish, we'll make sure you get the perfect water heater for your home and that it is installed safely.

1-877-867-7627

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