



## Things to watch for

**Live, unprotected wires**

**Proper junction box with cover and connections**

**Open junction box**

**Live wire in ceiling**

**Illegal splice**

**Corroded meter base**

Do you have two-prong outlets with no ground? This means your electrical system likely has no grounded circuits. Most appliances these days have a third prong, or a ground. It is possible that appliances with steel parts or casings can become live if there is a fault in the appliance and no ground is there to protect it.

New homes today have a breaker panel; in an older home you may have an old fuse panel. The problem with this system is that smaller amp fuses often get replaced with larger amp fuses if it keeps blowing. This is a concern because now you can overload that circuit and possibly cause damage to the protective insulation by overheating the wire. If a fuse blows, it is doing its job. A fuse that continually blows can be an indication that something is wrong. Loose fuses can also cause a situation where arcing can occur at the panel where electricity is trying to make the connection by bridging the gap from the fuse to the panel. Fire is possible where arcing occurs.

If you live in a home built in the 1970s, you may have aluminum wiring. You should know that copper and aluminum are not to be used together and there are compatible devices available to upgrade aluminum wiring.

Look for wires that have been joined by electrical tape (a spliced join), loose-hanging wires, burn marks on the face of outlets and open junction boxes. These are fire hazards and code violations. Do your lights dim or flicker when an appliance cuts in? This could be an indication of an overloaded circuit or a corroded neutral at your meter base. Look at your meter base on the exterior of your house; is there a lot of rust on the casing? If so, it is likely rusting on the inside as well. Always call an electrician if you have concerns.

If an appropriate outlet is not available, never use extension cords as a permanent solution. Have an electrician install a proper outlet.

In general, go with your gut feeling. If you think there are electrical issues in your home, make a phone call to a professional and have your concerns addressed. Most electricians will be happy to come to your home to identify problems, offer reasonable solutions and give you a free estimate on repairs. ■

## Did You Know?

The first edition of the Canadian Electrical Code was published in September 1927 in an effort to establish safety standards for installation, to prevent fire and to reduce shock hazards.

There were 180 changes to the Electrical Code in 2012. With so many constant changes in appliances and technology in recent years, the demand for electricity is high. Older electrical systems were not designed to handle today's demand.

If you buy an older home with a fuse panel, most insurance companies will not insure your home until it is replaced.

If you buy an older home that boasts a newly finished basement, you can call the city to find out if an electrical permit was issued for that work.

If you have knob and tube wiring in your home, you should consider having a complete electrical update.

Separate circuits are required for the fridge, microwave and dishwasher in your kitchen. ■