

# How not to let your heater get into hot water

The type of water in your area has a bearing on its life span

## vitamin c

SRAVANTHI CHALLAPALLI

In the 15 years that I have had them, I have had very few troubles with my water heaters. One misbehaved only twice. Maybe thrice. It overheated and melted the plastic supply pipe once, after hissing angrily and spewing steam. A few years later, a loud noise from its corner had me rushing to check whether it had blown up. Luckily, it hadn't exploded. We had to have the element replaced. It was fine till recently, except that it had developed a wheeze when it was switched on. When its heating speed slowed down and gradually came to a complete stop a couple of months ago, we replaced it on our plumber's advice.

Heaters seem to be hardy things, going by my experience and enquiry. Look for information on the Internet and you come across a

range of opinions from businesses in the category as well as consumers. Most seem to have lasted well over 10 years, and most businesses say 8-10 years is a good life span.

According to Abhijit Banshelkikar, Head of Research and Development at heater maker Racold Thermo, a water heater's life varies from 5-10 years depending upon the quality of the tank and the protective coating it contains to prevent corrosion. "Any water heater product gives peak performance during the first couple of years and deteriorates later due to scale build-up on the heating element and inside the tank based on the water quality in those regions. When the heating time increases, users need to understand about the scale build-up inside the unit and need to repair it," he says.

I don't remember being questioned about the type of water we had at home when we bought our older water heaters 15 years ago,



Hot stuff! Keep it sizzling, with good care

but this time, the sales assistant at the store did.

Banshelkikar explains that municipal water is treated and has lesser amount of TDS (total dissolved solids) whereas bore well water will have a higher level of TDS

and chlorine. Using treated water will increase the life of the heater whereas using bore well water leads to scale accumulating inside the unit, consuming more energy and corroding the tank.

Regular maintenance is

necessary to keep it in good working condition, he says, adding that an annual maintenance contract could help. Service personnel can check the quality of the tank and the heating element, the scaling, condition of the magnesium anode, meant to prevent rusting, the wiring, and such.

Products with high star ratings may seem expensive to buy, but are meant to save money in the long run. Water heating accounts for 15-25 per cent (higher in winters, lower in summers) of the average household's energy bill, says Banshelkikar. Replacing an old unit with a high-efficiency model will save you money and reduce your energy usage, he adds.

Here are some more tips from him: If you are the sort who wants a quick, hot bath, go in for water heaters with 3-6-litre capacities. If you indulge in showers, look for higher capacities of 35-50 litres. A 10-15 litre heater will do for a family of four, subject, of course, to usage and number of users. If you tend to use a lot of hot water, look for a model with fast recovery speed and higher capacity.