

SAFETY ALERT: THE DANGER IN YOUR SPICE CABINET P. 38

DECEMBER 2021

CR Consumer Reports®

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OUR



TOP

PICKS



**OF
THE YEAR**



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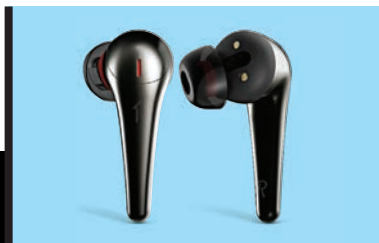


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ABOUT CONSUMER REPORTS

Consumer Reports is an independent, nonprofit organization founded in 1936 that works side by side with consumers to create a safe, fair, and transparent marketplace. To achieve our mission, we test thousands of products and services in our labs each year and survey hundreds of thousands of consumers about their experiences with products and services. We pay for all the

products we rate. We don't accept paid advertising.

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See page 63 for more details.

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RATINGS Overall Scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100. We rate products using these symbols:

❌ POOR ⚡ FAIR ⚡ GOOD
✅ VERY GOOD ⚡ EXCELLENT

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has my unconditional
support. I want people
to know CR is
right there with you
all day, every day.”**

—Sanford Waxer

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How CR Is Moving Forward



AS THE HOLIDAYS approach, some of us will venture back into stores, but others will continue to shop primarily online. This year we appreciated that so many of you who visited **CR.org** enjoyed the convenience of researching products and then seamlessly making purchases as part of our shopping program. CR's site is ad-free and influence-free, so you

don't have to worry about fake reviews or sponsored ad links disguised as reviews. Coming soon will be a new CR Deals hub that will help you shop with confidence and get the best deals on top-rated products.

And to be sure you benefit from CR's advice whenever and wherever you're considering a purchase, our CR Recommended mark is being extended beyond autos, washing machines, and dryers to help you make informed decisions across more product categories, such as dishwashers and printers. And CR's Green Choice program delivers guidance to the growing number of consumers who factor sustainability into their spending.

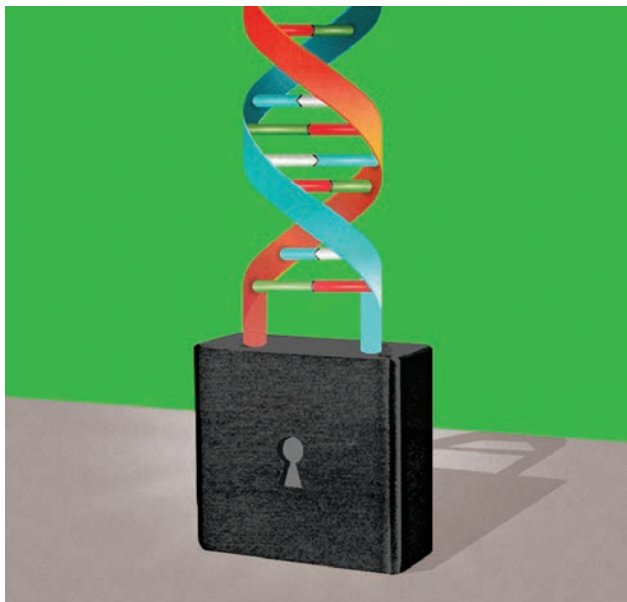
Consumer Reports is dedicated to evolving new ways to keep you one step ahead. We'll work to provide you with the tools you need, and we'll keep fighting for a fair, transparent, and consumer-focused marketplace.

One more thing: We know that, as a member of the CR community, you value safety and well-being—and are eager to stay abreast of the science that guides our work and the global fight to conquer COVID-19. At Consumer Reports, we have embraced the responsibility to contribute to the public health of our nation by requiring that anyone entering our facilities be vaccinated against COVID-19. We believe that this decision is consistent with our values as a mission-driven, science-based, and people-centered organization.

We wish you a safe and healthy 2022.

Marta Tellado

Marta L. Tellado,
President and CEO
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Protecting Your Genetic Data

For a modest fee, anyone can buy a direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetic test kit. You swab the inside of your mouth or spit into a tube to obtain a DNA sample, mail it off, and get an analysis a few weeks later. Marketed as a way to get insights about your health and family origins, the kits are hugely popular: About 1 in 5 Americans has taken a DTC genetic test, according to a nationally representative CR survey conducted in October 2020. Brands such as 23andMe and Ancestry are household names. The kits are even a popular holiday gift.

But DTC kits raise serious privacy and security concerns. The same CR survey found more than half of Americans believe info uncovered is protected by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) or other federal laws. They're wrong: In fact, few rules govern what companies can do with the data, and in most states it can be used without consumer consent. One risk is that insurance

companies could price or deny coverage based on one's DNA—or even that of a blood relative who happened to get tested.

That's why CR has been working with state legislators to pass laws forbidding the use of a person's genetic data without their consent, and ensuring that such data is stored securely. In September, California lawmakers passed two such bills, and in October the governor signed them into law. Learn how to delete your genetic data at [CR.org/dnatests1221](https://www.consumerreports.org/dnatests1221).



1 in 5 Americans
has done
DTC genetic testing.

52%

of Americans **mistakenly**
believe their DTC genetic
info is protected by
HIPAA or other laws.

Fighting for Free Credit Score Access

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Credit scores matter—a lot. Designed to help financial companies decide whether to lend consumers money, and at what interest rates, they can mean the difference between getting an affordable mortgage and being denied. They're also routinely used by insurance companies to set policy prices and by landlords to screen potential tenants.

Unfortunately, consumers don't have a legal right to see this crucial information about themselves free of charge—though they do have that right with regard to credit reports, the raw data on which credit scores are based. As a result, many resort to accessing their scores through credit score apps. One such app provider, Credit Karma, claims to have 110 million users, including nearly half of all millennials.

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

A new CR study, however, has found that credit score

apps come with major drawbacks. They barrage users with heavy-handed marketing pitches for other financial products that may not be in the users' best interest. They collect reams of personal information about users, which they use to market products and services to users. And many of the five apps studied don't even provide the kind of credit scores that lenders use to make decisions about you.

So CR is asking Congress to give consumers free access to real credit scores, which would eliminate the need for these services.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Go to [CR.org/creditscore1221](https://www.consumerreports.org/creditscore1221) to sign our petition urging Congress to pass legislation making credit scores free, easily accessible, and secure.



PROGRESS
REPORT

In early September, 10 months after the Consumer Product Safety Commission warned the public about the risks of using nursing pillows and loungers for infant sleep, CR's analysis of government data identified seven recent infant deaths connected to models made by the baby products brand Boppy. We called on the company to take action, and urged the CPSC to do so if the company would not. Then, on Sept. 23, Boppy recalled about 3.3 million of its loungers, which were being sold by Amazon, Pottery Barn, and other retailers. Learn more about the Boppy recall on page 19.



Our October 2021 article “The Big Problem With Plastic” revealed where the plastic we buy and recycle actually ends up, and how to use less of it. Readers shared their views and their hopes for a cleaner future. To join the conversation, go to **CR.org/plastic1221**.

AFTER READING your report, our family decided to reduce our plastic usage. We have started using aluminum soda cans and refillable aluminum soap dispensers. We use corn-based trash bags instead of plastic. We are paying more attention to what gets tossed into the recycling bin—does it have a 1 or 2 in the triangle? You can imagine my surprise when I went to toss a plastic coffee creamer bottle in the bin—yep, it had a 1, but on the side of the bottle, in small print, it said the bottle was

not recyclable unless the label was removed. It is clear why so many people do not recycle: The requirements are not clear, and most people do not read the fine print. Why should we have to? Corporate America, wake up: The onus is on all of us. Why make it so hard?
—Barbara Smart, Palmdale, CA

WOW! WHAT AN informative article! I believe that single-stream recycling is a fraud. It seems that common sense should tell us that separating so many items is impossible. In order to make recycling feasible the public will have to put more energy into the process. In the 1970s my mother and I would go to a nearby town that had bins

for individual recyclables. We'd haul our clean metal cans, aluminum, paper, cardboard, plastic, and glass. But then the city closed it because it was costing too much. There must be a way to finance recycling. Most of all, we need to educate every consumer about using plastic. When I hear, “Is plastic okay?” at checkouts, I want to scream, “No! Plastic is not okay! Bring your own bags!” And manufacturers should give clear instructions on what can be recycled and what cannot.
—Mary Bellrose, Wildwood, MO

RE YOUR ILLUMINATING but depressing article about the nonrecycling of most plastics: I gave up meat 35 years ago. I gave up recreational travel a

decade ago. I am *not* going to give up the convenience of clamshell packaging of grocery foods. The country should ban hard-to-recycle plastics so that everything remaining can go into one recycling stream. If other plastics are essential for certain purposes, require that they be a distinct color so that they can easily be sorted out.
—Gregg Jackson, Washington, DC

FOR A LONG TIME I have felt guilty about buying yogurt because the containers aren't always recyclable. Your article spurred me to look up how to make my own yogurt and to write a letter to the maker of the yogurt I usually buy (a Greek yogurt sold at Aldi), complaining about the sale of any of their products in nonrecyclable containers. Thank you for the kick in the butt. I needed it.
—Shanti Sheri Gonyea, Clarksville, TN

AS A CHEMICAL ENGINEER who worked in the petrochemical industry and in pyrolysis (decomposition) research, I think the path to solving this crisis is by returning the plastic to the petrochemical plants where it was hatched. Drop the confusing numbers. Stop the wasteful scrubbing to remove food waste. Take all waste plastic, blend it, shred it, pelletize it, then feed it to existing refinery fluid cokers, where it will be pyrolyzed at high temperature, converting the waste plastic back into a mix of gas, oil, and [petroleum] coke. Hundreds of pounds of waste plastic recycled this way into a refinery backs out a barrel of crude oil, reducing greenhouse gas emissions with each barrel saved. Couch cushions, tires, clothing, plastic bottles, plastic bags, clean or dirty—it doesn't matter. The petrochemical companies in joint venture



WRITE

Go to **CR.org/lettertoeditor** to share your comments for publication.

with waste management companies should already be doing this. If they can't get onboard, then a simple regulation forcing them to buy back 1 pound of plastic for every pound of plastic they sell will encourage them to have their engineers innovate their own profitable solutions.

—Mike Benning, Swampscott, MA

EDITOR'S NOTE So far, advanced recycling techniques such as pyrolysis haven't proved to be economically feasible on a large scale, according to the experts we consulted. And while pyrolysis can certainly generate energy, some research suggests that it may emit an amount of greenhouse gas that's similar to what landfilling emits. Plus, new plastic production will still generate significant emissions and toxic chemicals. That said, many experts agree that economic incentives that require producers to take responsibility for all the plastic they make certainly could help solve the plastic waste problem.

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BREAD BASICS

YOUR ARTICLE ABOUT "Bread That's Really Good for You" (October 2021) mentioned making your own bread. But there is another great option. Many states have a "Cottage Food Law" that allows small entrepreneurs to make food for sale in their own kitchens. My best friend makes very healthy homemade bread, and it's sold at a local farmers market. It is a great alternative to store-bought bread. I pay for weekly delivery of a fresh loaf, which I slice and keep in the freezer so that I have bread with the freshest ingredients and no additives. So check around your local community and see if someone is selling homemade bread.

—Kathy Quinn, Prattville, AL

WHAT HAPPENED to rye bread? I kept thinking I would see some data on it. Rye is a grain, and I have always heard that it is healthier than the white or wheat breads.

—Hale Quigley, Pensacola, FL

EDITOR'S NOTE For the sake of comparison, we rated mostly wheat breads for our October article. And many rye and pumpernickel sandwich breads on the market aren't 100 percent whole-grain. They're made of mostly white wheat flour with some rye flour mixed in. Like white bread, they tend to be low in fiber—just 1 gram per slice. You can look for what's sometimes called fitness bread. These are 100 percent whole-grain rye; they're very dark, dense, and moist, and are typically sold in packages that contain just a few slices.



YOUR FAVORITE PANDEMIC PURCHASES ... REVEALED

Many of us bought a few things to make life easier during the COVID-19 pandemic—from appliances to cars. So CR asked what your favorite purchase was in the past 18 months. (See responses, below.) For more smart buys to make in the coming months, turn to "CR's Top Picks," on page 24.

NUMBER OF COMMENTS



Data based on text analysis courtesy of Dina Haner, CR senior data scientist.



WINTER CLEANING TIPS

I READ YOUR Insights article "Choose a Great Humidifier for Winter" in the October 2021 issue. I feel that it should be mentioned that the water reservoir must be cleaned regularly, including changing the water in the reservoir tank every day or two, to help prevent mold and/or bacterial growth. Not doing this could lead to pathogens being aerosolized by the humidifier to perhaps cause health problems.

—Sandy Halperin, Tallahassee, FL

EDITOR'S NOTE You're right: Regular cleaning is a very important part of humidifier use. On page 20 of this issue, you'll find a deeper dive into CR's humidifier testing, and how to keep yours clean in three easy steps.



CHAIN REACTION

RE "CLEANING UP FAST FOOD" (Building a Better World, Together, October 2021): What an eye opener! Your article mentioned it was the latest Chain Reaction report—how often do you publish it?

—Mary Haskell, Bloomington, IL

EDITOR'S NOTE For the past six years, CR and five other consumer advocacy groups have published an annual Chain Reaction report, which grades national fast-food and fast casual sit-down chains on antibiotics policies and practices. To see these reports, including the most recent—Chain Reaction VI—go to advocacy.consumerreports.org and search for "chain reaction."

What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

In our 63 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.

Chromebooks

WE TESTED: 32 models
WE TEST FOR: Quality of display; ergonomics, including keyboard design; performance when running browsers and applications; battery life; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 69
Range: 62-87

EXCELLENT BUT PRICEY
Acer Chromebook Spin 713
\$530

86
OVERALL
SCORE



TOP-NOTCH DISPLAY
Samsung Galaxy Chromebook 2
\$550

79
OVERALL
SCORE



BARGAIN BUY
Acer Chromebook 314 CB314-1 HT-C934
\$230

77
OVERALL
SCORE



Double-Oven Ranges

WE TESTED: 7 electric models
WE TEST FOR: How evenly an oven bakes cookies and cakes, how quickly the stovetop can bring a large pot of water to a near-boil, oven capacity, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 80
Range: 72-83

CONVERTS FROM SINGLE TO DOUBLE OVEN
Samsung NE63T8751SG
\$2,600

83
OVERALL
SCORE



INDUCTION STOVETOP
KitchenAid KFID500ESS
\$3,000

73
OVERALL
SCORE



NICE PRICE
GE JBS86SPSS
\$1,220

72
OVERALL
SCORE



Ask Our Experts

What are the benefits—and drawbacks—of a double-oven range?



DOUBLE-OVEN RANGES usually pair a smaller top oven with a larger oven below. It's a combo that's handy when you need to cook two dishes at once—but at different temperatures. Though double-oven ranges can be less pricey than double wall ovens, they are often more expensive than a single-oven range, says CR market analyst Antonella Pomilla. Before you buy one, check it out at a store. The lower oven is usually close to the floor, so you'll want to see how comfortable you are crouching down to use it. Make sure the controls are easy to use as well. Keep in mind that it won't have a storage or warming drawer, which most single-oven ranges feature.

For the latest ratings of these and other product categories, readers with a Digital or All Access membership can go to [CR.org](https://www.consumerreports.org).

Low-Cost Ellipticals

WE TESTED: 7 models
WE TEST FOR: Ease of operation; variety of settings, including heart rate features; user safety mechanisms; sturdiness; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 63
Range: 47-74

BEST OVERALL
Schwinn 470
\$1,000

74
OVERALL
SCORE



EXCELLENT HEART RATE FEATURES
Nautilus E616
\$1,100

71
OVERALL
SCORE



BUDGET-FRIENDLY BUT NO HEART RATE FEATURES
Horizon Fitness EX-59
\$650

63
OVERALL
SCORE



Porcelain Tile Flooring

WE TESTED: 5 products
WE TEST FOR: Resistance to stains from ink, bleach, and shoe polish; resistance to abrasions and dents from foot traffic; resistance to ultraviolet exposure; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 92
Range: 72-93

TOP PICK & DURABLE
LifeProof Shadow Wood LP33624HD1PR (Home Depot)
\$2 per square foot

93
OVERALL
SCORE



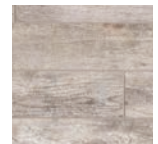
SUPER AT RESISTING STAINS
Style Selections Natural Timber Ash 553878 (Lowe's)
\$4 per square foot

92
OVERALL
SCORE



BARGAIN BUY
Marazzi Montagna Dapple Gray ULM7 (Home Depot)
\$1.50 per square foot

92
OVERALL
SCORE



CR Best Buy Mirrorless Cameras

WE TESTED: 47 models
WE TEST FOR: Photo and video quality; ease of use, including settings; battery life; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 82
Range: 70-92

BEST BATTERY LIFE & EXCELLENT 4K VIDEO QUALITY
Fujifilm X-E4 w/27 mm
\$1,050

87
OVERALL
SCORE



SWIVELING LCD SCREEN FOR ADDED CONVENIENCE
Panasonic Lumix DMC-G85 w/12-60 mm f/3.5-5.6 Power OIS
\$700

81
OVERALL
SCORE



EASY TO CARRY BECAUSE IT'S LIGHTWEIGHT
Canon Eos M200 w/15-45 mm IS STM
\$550

80
OVERALL
SCORE



Antivirus Software

WE TESTED: 35 products
WE TEST FOR: Protection against malware attacks, ability to scan for malware, ease of use, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

WINDOWS
Median: 72; Range: 45-77
MAC
Median: 63; Range: 44-69

BEST FREE PROTECTION FOR WINDOWS
Avast Free Antivirus
\$0

77
OVERALL
SCORE



BEST FREE PROTECTION FOR MAC
Avast Security for Mac
\$0

69
OVERALL
SCORE



EXTRA FEATURES & EASY TO USE FOR MAC
Kaspersky Internet Security for Mac
\$25

67
OVERALL
SCORE



Note: We rate different products according to different testing protocols; as a result, Overall Scores of one product category are not comparable with those of another.

COMING NEXT MONTH Sheets & More



Is it okay if I skip the flu shot this year? I'm vaccinated against COVID-19 and work from home.

IT'S NOT WISE to skip the flu shot, because COVID-19 vaccines won't protect you from the flu. And health experts are predicting that this year's flu season could be severe, with the respiratory virus circulating along with others, including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Last winter, with some of the strictest precautions against COVID still in place, transmission levels of the flu were historically low, and as a result there were far fewer cases than usual. But what that means is that this year many of us may have a lower level of natural immunity against the flu than in a typical season, says Lynnette Brammer,

MPH, an epidemiologist in the influenza division at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This may be more worrisome for children than for adults, who have less immunity in general to the flu.

The CDC estimates that flu vaccinations averted about 105,000 hospitalizations last year. The best time to get a flu shot is in the fall, so get yours as soon as possible. And for those who haven't had their COVID-19 vaccine yet (and those planning to get a booster shot), you can get it at the same time you get your flu shot.

Why are car batteries so expensive these days?

THE INCREASE in prices is partly due to a rise in the cost of materials and labor to make car batteries, and the impact of COVID-19 on manufacturing and supply chains. This year the average price of the batteries we buy and test is \$195, up from an

average of \$106 in 2012. Another reason is that many batteries sold today have newer designs that are more expensive to manufacture. Many of them aren't the traditional lead-acid version (aka "flooded" batteries). Instead, a number of companies offer batteries that are designed to handle the increased electrical demands of newer vehicles, such as stop/start technology, heated seats, and extra power outlets.

One of the increasingly popular newer battery designs you might see is called absorbed glass mat (AGM). These batteries use a glass mat separator to move an electrolyte solution between its thin battery plates. This makes AGMs better able stand up to repeated draining and recharging cycles than traditional lead-acid batteries, and they power a newer car's electric conveniences more easily. The AGM batteries in our ratings start around \$140, with many of the best models in the \$200 to \$300 range. (This is 40 to 100 percent more than some of the lead-acid batteries we've tested.) "The added expense of an AGM does bring real benefits to the consumer," says John Galeotafoire, CR's associate director of testing, who oversees our tests of car batteries.

I'm craving a chocolate dessert that won't wreck my diet. Any suggestions?

TO SATISFY YOUR chocolate craving in a healthier way, CR's dietitians whipped up a treat you can feel good about: a 244-calorie Chocolate Tahini Smoothie. It's made with unsweetened cocoa powder, which offers a rich, dense flavor without any added sugars while boosting antioxidants and fiber. The tahini, a paste made from sesame seeds, provides heart-healthy fats and gives the drink a creamy texture.

Our single-serving recipe still contains a good amount of sugars (31 grams), but those come from a banana and a date and are balanced by a healthy combo of protein (7 grams), fiber (9 grams), and fat (5 grams), which will help keep your energy levels stable. To make it, put these ingredients into a blender and process until smooth: ½ cup of unsweetened vanilla soy milk, 2 tablespoons of unsweetened cocoa powder, a medjool date (pitted and chopped), a banana (fresh or frozen), and 2 tablespoons of tahini.

Once blended, top your smoothie with 1 tablespoon of whipped cream. You can skip the topping if you like, but 1 tablespoon is only 8 calories and adds less than a gram of fat to the drink.



LEARN

We have more than 140 in-house experts who research, test, and compare. Submit your questions at [CR.org/askourexperts](https://www.consumerreports.org/askourexperts) ... and watch for the answers.

CR Insights

IN THE KNOW

Great New Door Locks

HAVING A STRONG LOCK on your door is one of the best things that you can do to protect your home from prowlers: Forcible entries (both attempted and completed) were the entry method used for about 62 percent of all burglaries in 2019, according to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting program.

Smart locks—those you can operate with a smartphone via WiFi or bluetooth—promise easy, secure new ways to lock your doors. To help you decide whether one is right for you, our testers kicked, picked, and drilled all types of smart locks, as well as conventional deadbolts, to see how they stand up to common break-in attempts.

In those tests, we found that while a smart lock doesn't guarantee you stronger protection against break-ins than a regular lock does, it can certainly offer you more conveniences. Internet-connected smart locks give you the option of remotely locking (and unlocking) your doors via your smartphone, which is helpful if you forgot to lock up or you need to let in contractors or other home helpers when you're not there. Many also offer geofencing (the ability to auto-lock or -unlock

doors based on your phone's location), time logs of comings and goings, and tamper alarms.

You can also get your conventional deadbolt retrofitted with a smart lock, such as the Bosma above. Instead of fully replacing your deadbolt, these models usually replace the interior, thumb-turn side of it. This allows you to keep a

conventional deadbolt and keys on the exterior while gaining smart features, such as remote control and auto-unlocking, when you want them—an ideal setup for renters. But a retrofit lock is only as good as the deadbolt it works with. So you should pair it with a strong one, such as the Abloy model above.

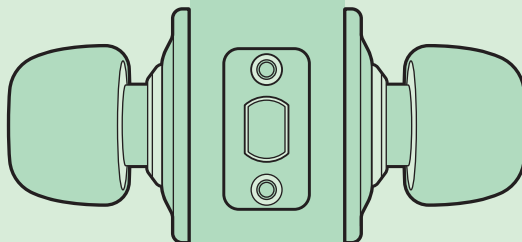
✓ **Bosma Aegis Smart Lock**
SL0001 \$120

98 OVERALL SCORE



✓ **Abloy Protec 2**
ME153 \$350

96 OVERALL SCORE



A SMART & STRONG PAIR

Combine a retrofit smart lock, such as the Bosma, shown at far left, with a compatible conventional deadbolt that holds up well in our break-in tests, such as the Abloy, at left.



HIGH-SECURITY
STAND-ALONE
CONVENTIONAL LOCK

✓ **Medeco Maxum**
11*603 \$190



96
OVERALL SCORE

EXCELLENT WIFI-
CAPABLE SMART LOCK

✓ **Eufy Smart Lock Touch & WiFi**
T8520J11 \$260



85
OVERALL SCORE

DINING OUT

Healthier Fast-Food Breakfasts

FAST-FOOD MENUS are crowded with hefty breakfast sandwiches and sugary donuts—making it no easy feat to navigate past them all to find a healthier choice. “Ideally, your breakfast should have some whole grains, fruit, or vegetables—or all three,” says Amy Keating, RD, a nutritionist at CR. That means scanning for simpler egg dishes, sandwiches on whole-grain breads, or oatmeal and yogurt options with fresh fruit toppings. “Aiming for 500 calories or less is a good goal for most diets, too,” Keating says.

Of course, it's hard to compare nutrition counts and ingredients when you're in a hurry, so CR reviewed three popular chain menus to find tasty choices that help you start your a.m. in a healthier way.



DUNKIN'

▲ Veggie Egg White Omelette on a Multigrain Thin

CALORIES 290	SATURATED FAT 5 g
FIBER 5 g	ADDED SUGARS 3 g
PROTEIN 17 g	SODIUM 550 mg

WHY WE LIKE IT Egg whites are good for you, and though the thin is not all whole grain, it gives a hit of fiber.

■ Avocado Toast*

CALORIES 240	SATURATED FAT 1.5 g
FIBER 6 g	ADDED SUGARS 0 g
PROTEIN 6 g	SODIUM 530 mg

WHY WE LIKE IT The toast is made with some whole grains, and the avocado has healthy fats.

■ Multigrain Bagel With Cream Cheese

CALORIES 500	SATURATED FAT 9 g
FIBER 8 g	ADDED SUGARS 7 g
PROTEIN 17 g	SODIUM 750 mg

WHY WE LIKE IT Made with some whole grains and seeds, this bagel offers protein and fiber. Cream cheese is lower in calories and saturated fat than butter is.



PANERA BREAD

▲ Steel Cut Oatmeal With Strawberries, Pecans & Cinnamon Crunch Topping

CALORIES 360	SATURATED FAT 2 g
FIBER 9 g	ADDED SUGARS 13 g
PROTEIN 8 g	SODIUM 150 mg

WHY WE LIKE IT Oatmeal, a whole grain, is a great source of cholesterol-lowering soluble fiber.

■ Avocado, Egg White & Spinach Sandwich

CALORIES 350	SATURATED FAT 5 g
FIBER 5 g	ADDED SUGARS 2 g
PROTEIN 19 g	SODIUM 690 mg

WHY WE LIKE IT This bagel flat is made partly with whole grains and sneaks in vegetables, too.

■ Greek Yogurt With Mixed Berries Parfait

CALORIES 240	SATURATED FAT 4.5 g
FIBER 2 g	ADDED SUGARS 8 g
PROTEIN 15 g	SODIUM 80 mg

WHY WE LIKE IT The fresh fruit and the protein and fat in the whole-milk yogurt will help keep you full.



STARBUCKS

▲ Kale & Portabella Mushroom Sous Vide Egg Bites + Banana

CALORIES 340	SATURATED FAT 9 g
FIBER 5 g	ADDED SUGARS 0 g
PROTEIN 17 g	SODIUM 340 mg

WHY WE LIKE IT Eggs and veggies are a filling choice. Add a banana to up the fiber and potassium.

■ Petite Vanilla Bean Scone + Siggi's Nonfat Vanilla Yogurt

CALORIES 230	SATURATED FAT 2 g
FIBER 0 g	ADDED SUGARS 12 g**
PROTEIN 18 g	SODIUM 150 mg

WHY WE LIKE IT This two-bite scone satisfies a sweet tooth. The yogurt adds filling protein.

■ Eggs & Cheddar Protein Box

CALORIES 470	SATURATED FAT 7 g
FIBER 5 g	ADDED SUGARS 3 g
PROTEIN 23 g	SODIUM 460 mg

WHY WE LIKE IT It's well-balanced, with hard-boiled eggs, multi-grain bread, nut butter, cheese, and fruit.

CR Time Traveler TOP PICKS



1937 In our first test of washing machines, the Watermatic, \$99.50, is the best of 15 models for its superior washing and rinsing.

1945 A new innovation in drip coffee pots, the Chemex “rates first place among the 19 coffee makers we tested,” CR says.



1952 Our first dishwasher tests reveal two top picks: a Hotpoint and a KitchenAid with Excellent cleaning and drying.

1960 We test new refrigerators that can defrost themselves, and a Frigidaire (available in multiple colors) takes the top spot.



1977 In our tests of 20 exercise bikes, this Schwinn Deluxe “clearly led the field by a wide margin,” we say, and is also a CR Best Buy.

CR SAVVY SHOPPER

Try Musical Holiday Lights

WANT TO ADD holiday music to your outdoor light display this year? “Smart” musical string lights, designed to blink and change colors in sync to your favorite seasonal tunes, have become increasingly popular. CR home editor Dan Wroclawski tried out some musical sets and learned a few things about creating your own spectacular front yard show.

For easy setup, get a preprogrammed set. Many consumers may be happy with a simple plug-and-play set—string lights that come with several pre-programmed holiday songs that the lights flash in time to. “Once the lights are strung up, you just press play and watch the magic happen,” Wroclawski says.

To create your own light patterns, get a set that connects to WiFi, like the Twinkly shown at right. In addition to having preprogrammed shows, it lets you customize light patterns from a smartphone app and even control them with your voice via Amazon and Google smart speakers. “Twinkly’s app uses your phone’s camera to create a 2D or 3D map of the bulbs, so you can change

the color of each individual one to create your own patterns that match the music,” Wroclawski says.

Check whether a speaker is included. Some sets don’t include one, which means that if you want passersby to hear the tunes your lights are dancing in sync to, you’ll need to supply a wireless Bluetooth speaker and connect it. If you don’t have one, try the Anker SoundCore Rave Neo, \$110; it’s water-resistant, so it can stay outside with your lights.

You can turn off the music. Don’t worry—these musical sets don’t need to play music or flash patterns every time you turn them on. They can also be set to look like regular holiday lights until you decide it’s time for the next show.



EDITOR'S PICK

Twinkly Generation II Strings and Music Adapter
\$70 to \$230 per light set (depending on number of bulbs); \$40 for music adapter (sold at Amazon, Best Buy, and Walmart). Speaker not included.



1989 Sales of laptops are growing, so we test eight models. This Toshiba tops our ratings for being “lightweight” with a superior screen.



1999 A 34-inch Sony is the best of the high-definition (HD) TVs we test. We say it’s “stunning,” with Excellent picture and sound quality.



2015 Best tested: The AWD Tesla Model S P85D gets a higher rating than we’ve ever awarded to a car before, earning a perfect score of 100.



✓ **Avocado Green**
\$1,500

85
OVERALL SCORE



2021 Our editors compile 2021’s Top Picks—including this mattress, which has topped our inner-spring ratings for three years running.



1993 Our first tests of cell phones includes 19 models. The Audiovox MVX-500 rates best for overall performance and cell coverage.



2013 In our tests of new robotic vacuums, the iRobot Roomba 760 is the only model to suck up every crumb we throw on our test carpet.

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Get Free TV With an Indoor Antenna



AN INDOOR TV ANTENNA, which connects to the antenna (RF) input on your TV, can give you access to free over-the-air television. Indoor antennas are easy to put up (many simply stick to a wall), but positioning one for optimal reception is crucial to maximizing the number of channels you'll get.

New digital TV antennas can bring in TV stations such as ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, PBS, and Telemundo. Here, our experts explain how to ensure your antenna gets all of the stations available to you.

Scout for Reception

In our tests, reception depended mainly on your antenna's distance from your local broadcast towers and TV transmitters (which send out TV signals), as well as anything in between, like the terrain and nearby trees, buildings, etc. Though you can't change your local geography,

you can find out where the local broadcast towers are in your area. Visit the Federal Communications Commission's DTV antenna map, then click on the station's call letters to see where the signals are coming from. You'll also be able to determine how many stations you should be able to pull in with an antenna and their relative signal strength. If the signal looks weak, look for an "amplified" model that helps boost signal strength.

You may need to try several antennas to see which one works best for your home's location. So prioritize retailers with a no-hassle return policy.

Place It as High as You Can

Performance is often best when an antenna is up high on a wall or shelf. Try a few spots in the room where your TV is, such as along the wall near the ceiling, preferably on or by a window.

If you have an attic, consider placing the antenna there and running a long cable down to the TV. "It's also handy to have an extra length of RG6 coaxial cable and a 'female-to-female' coax cable joiner so that you can freely move the antenna around," says CR tech editor Jim Willcox. "And painter's tape is useful to temporarily attach the antennas as you scout." Each time you move the antenna, run a channel scan on your TV to see which spot pulls in the most stations.

Check CR's Band Rankings

Today's antennas can find local channels on the VHF band (channels 2 through 13) and the UHF band (channels 14 through 51). In our tests, we note the percentage of stations a model receives on each band. Some of the best we tried (at right) received 80 to 90 percent of stations on UHF and 50 percent on VHF.

TOP ANTENNAS WE TESTED

Winegard FlatWave Amped FL5500A \$60

% OF STATIONS RECEIVED

80%

AMPLIFIED: YES

% OF UHF/VHF STATIONS RECEIVED

UHF 90% VHF 50%



Winegard FlatWave Amped Pro-TH-3000 \$110

% OF STATIONS RECEIVED

80%

AMPLIFIED: YES

% OF UHF/VHF STATIONS RECEIVED

UHF 90% VHF 50%



ClearStream Eclipse Amplified TV Antenna \$60

% OF STATIONS RECEIVED

80%

AMPLIFIED: YES

% OF UHF/VHF STATIONS RECEIVED

UHF 80% VHF 50%



ROAD SMARTS

PACK YOUR CAR SAFELY THIS SEASON

Transporting gifts and more over the holidays? Keep these safety tips in mind as you load up your vehicle.

STACK YOUR CARGO CORRECTLY.

In all vehicles, and SUVs in particular, your heaviest items should be placed in the middle of the vehicle. This helps keep the center of gravity lower, reducing the likelihood of a rollover. Too much weight far back can reduce weight over the front wheels, affecting your ability to steer or brake. Try to fit soft duffel bags in the back-seat area. Don't pile loose items on top of luggage in an SUV trunk—they block your view and can fly around with a sudden stop; pack them into a larger bag below headrest height.

CHECK THE DRIVER'S DOORJAMB.

This is where you'll find a placard with your vehicle's weight capacity. If your car is filled with both people and their luggage, you may be surprised by how easily you'll surpass that number: Several adults can consume much of the weight capacity for many vehicles, before even factoring in luggage. If your cargo weighs more than your vehicle can safely manage, it can have an impact on your car's handling and steering. Before you set off, also check that you have adequate tire pressure.

Is Dried Fruit Good for You?

Dried fruit has a reputation for being high in calories and sugar, but, say experts, it can be just as good for you as fresh. In fact, according to research published in 2020 in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, adults who ate dried fruit had a lower body mass index (BMI) and systolic blood pressure (and a healthier overall diet) than those who didn't. "Many dried fruits are good sources of fiber and potassium—two nutrients that Americans need to consume more of—as well as phytochemicals [beneficial plant compounds]," says study author Valerie Sullivan, RDN, a postdoctoral fellow in epidemiology at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. But some dried fruits are more nutritious than others, and calories can add up quickly if you don't watch portion sizes. Below, the benefits of six dried fruits, along with what to watch out for.

APRICOTS



*Serving of 5 to 6 apricots**

CALORIES 96
CARBOHYDRATES 25 g
FIBER 3 g
SUGARS 21 g
ADDED SUGARS 0 g

These sweet orbs supply the cell-protecting antioxidants beta-carotene and vitamin E. Apricots (and other bright-colored dried fruit) often contain sulfite preservatives. For most people, this isn't a problem, but sulfites can cause reactions in those who are sensitive. Five percent of people with asthma may experience respiratory reactions from eating them. One important note: The glazed types you see around the holidays contain added sugars.

BANANA CHIPS



Serving of 1/4 cup

CALORIES 200
CARBOHYDRATES 27 g
FIBER 1 g
SUGARS 12 g
ADDED SUGARS 8 g

Banana chips are particularly problematic because they're often fried in coconut oil, and that bumps up their saturated fat—the kind of fat that raises blood cholesterol and calories. Sugar can be added too. For a healthier choice, look for chips that are dehydrated instead of fried, like Bare Baked Crunchy Simply Banana Chips or truly dried bananas, like Good & Gather (Target) Organic Unsweetened Dried Banana Slices.

FIGS



Serving of 5 figs

CALORIES 105
CARBOHYDRATES 27 g
FIBER 4 g
SUGARS 20 g
ADDED SUGARS 0 g

Sweet and a little crunchy from a seed-filled inside, dried figs are one of the only fruits that provide calcium: Just one serving of five dried figs has 68 mg of this bone-building nutrient. If you notice a white, flaky substance on your dried figs, it is most likely natural sugars that have crystallized on the surface of the fruit instead of added sugars—but you can always check the ingredients label just to be sure.

MANGO



Serving of 4 slices

CALORIES 130
CARBOHYDRATES 29 g
FIBER 2 g
SUGARS 21 g
ADDED SUGARS 0 g

Thin, flat slices of dried mango supply vitamin A and a decent amount of potassium. And one small study suggests that eating mangoes may even help to lower blood pressure and generally improve heart health in older women. Check the label before you buy dried mango though; some offerings are made with sulfites and added sugars. The good news: Dried mango without added sugars is naturally a little sweet all on its own.

PINEAPPLE



Serving of 2 rings

CALORIES 140
CARBOHYDRATES 35 g
FIBER 1 g
SUGARS 32 g
ADDED SUGARS 7 g

In any form, pineapple is a good source of the anti-inflammatory enzyme bromelain. Just look out for added sugars. Some brands of dried pineapple contain fairly high amounts of the sweet stuff. For example, Mariani Tropical Pineapple has 18 grams per serving. Now Real Food Pineapple Rings (above), with 7 g, are a bit better, but it's really best to look for those with no added sugars at all, if you can find them.

PRUNES



Serving of 4 prunes

CALORIES 91
CARBOHYDRATES 24 g
FIBER 3 g
SUGARS 14 g
ADDED SUGARS 0 g

Prunes, also known as dried plums, really do help with constipation, according to a 2019 study from King's College London. Other research reveals that the mix of antioxidant phytochemicals and nutrients in prunes may help strengthen bones and prevent osteoporosis. It's probably not worth paying more for probiotic-added options: Prunes already offer plenty of digestion benefits.

REPAIR OR REPLACE?

5 Common Snow Blower Problems, Solved

SNOW BLOWERS ARE complicated machines, so it's only natural that troubles will arise on occasion. Some are easily prevented, and others, when addressed quickly, can help you avoid poor performance or bigger, pricier repairs down the road.

PROBLEM 1

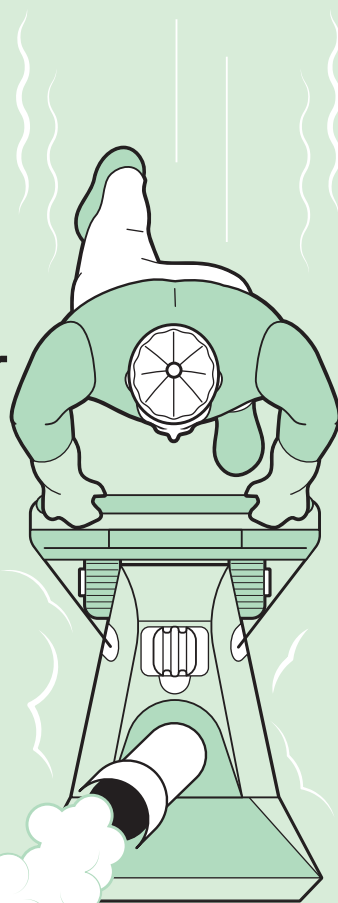
The Blower Won't Start

If the gas in your tank is more than 30 days old, ethanol in the fuel may have caused moisture to build up in the fuel system. Use a gas siphon to drain old gas from the blower, then refuel with fresh stabilized gasoline and try again. (For electric models, make sure it's plugged in or that the battery is fully charged.)

PROBLEM 2

The Blower Lurches Forward

Over time, the cables that send power to the wheels need to be adjusted to apply proper tension to the belt on two-stage snow blowers. You probably need to tighten the line. Unclip the cable from the handle and tighten the line's threaded adjustment



at the base. Then reconnect the clip and test the handling. Adjust again as necessary until the lurching stops. Then spray some lubricant at the pivot points of any moving parts.

PROBLEM 3

The Machine Leaves Behind Too Much Snow

A flat metal bar on the underside of the machine chisels snow and ice off the ground and into the auger. Running over concrete, asphalt, and gravel can wear down the metal, leaving behind furrows of snow. Prop up the snow blower and remove the bolts that hold the bar to the housing, and replace it with a new one. (Search by brand at Snow Blowers Direct to order one online.) Adjust the new bar to be about 3/8 inch above the ground

when plowing a flat surface such as concrete. On gravel, you should aim for about 1 inch of clearance.

PROBLEM 4

The Belt Breaks

The friction required to engage the auger belt on a single-stage snow blower tends to wear down a belt faster than on two-stage machines. Between uses, remove the cover and check the belt for cracks. Replace a suspect belt by pulling off the wheel, then the belt, and adding the replacement part in reverse order. Changing a belt on a larger two-stage machine involves dismantling the unit to gain access to the flywheel, a job best left to a pro. And if you want to avoid trekking to a store in a snowstorm, it's a good idea to always have a replacement belt (and extra shear pins) on hand.

PROBLEM 5

The Engine Runs, but the Auger Won't Turn

With the engine off and key removed, inspect the auger and/or impeller for obvious problems, such as a rock that's keeping moving parts from turning. (To remove it, use a clearing tool or broom handle—never use your hands or feet.) Next, inspect the shear pins, typically located near the auger. These pins will break when your blower hits an obstruction, causing the auger to stop working. Replacing these pins should get your blower working again. It's smart to buy a few extra pins at the start of the season so that you have them on hand for repairs.

NEED A NEW SNOW BLOWER?

Try one of these top-performing models from our tests.

FOR HEAVY SNOW
(UP TO 16 INCHES)

✓ **Toro Power Max HD 928 OAE 38840**
Two-Stage Gas Powered, \$1,400

92 OVERALL SCORE



FOR MEDIUM SNOW
(UP TO 8-12 INCHES)

✓ **Ego SNT2405**
Two-Stage Battery Powered, \$1,300

79 OVERALL SCORE



FOR LIGHT SNOW
(UP TO 8 INCHES)

✓ **Toro Power Clear e21 39901**
Single-Stage Battery Powered, \$650

66 OVERALL SCORE





RECALLS

TO STAY INFORMED ABOUT RECALLS FOR YOUR VEHICLES, READERS WITH MEMBERSHIP CAN USE OUR FREE CAR RECALL TRACKER AT [CR.ORG/MORE](https://www.consumerreports.org/more).



VOLVO S60 AND S80 VEHICLES

Volvo is recalling more than 259,000 S60 sedans from the 2001 through 2009 model years and S80 sedans from the 2001 through 2006 model years because a faulty inflator within the driver's-side airbag might rupture and launch metal fragments toward occupants if the airbag deploys. One person has been killed as a result of these faulty airbags, according to documents from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

What to do: Volvo is expected to notify owners by mail beginning Nov. 29, 2021, but owners may contact Volvo customer service at 800-458-1552. Volvo will replace the faulty driver's airbag with a new airbag that contains a different propellant and inflator, free of charge. The NHTSA campaign number for this recall is 21V766; Volvo's internal number is R10125.

BOPPY NEWBORN LOUNGERS

The Boppy Company is recalling about 3.3 million Boppy Newborn Loungers, including Original, Preferred, and Pottery Barn Kids models, because infants can suffocate if they roll, move, or are placed on the lounger in a position that obstructs breathing, or if they roll off the lounger onto an external surface, such as an adult pillow or soft bedding that obstructs breathing. The loungers were sold at juvenile product stores and mass merchandisers nationwide and online, including Amazon, Pottery Barn Kids, Target, and Walmart, from January 2004 through September 2021 for \$30 to \$44.

What to do: Stop using the lounger and call Boppy at 800-416-1355 or go to [boppy.com](https://www.boppy.com) for a refund.

HOVERTRAX BATTERY PACKS

Razor is recalling about 237,300 Hovertrax 2.0 Self-Balancing Scooters/Hoverboards with lithium-ion GLW battery packs because the battery packs can overheat, posing a risk of the products smoking, catching fire, and/or exploding. The scooters were sold at Target, Toys "R" Us, Walmart, and other stores nationwide and online at Amazon, [walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com), and other websites from September 2016 through 2018 for about \$460.

What to do: Stop using the scooters/hoverboards and contact Razor at 866-467-2967 or go to [razor.com](https://www.razor.com) for instructions on how to obtain a prepaid shipping carton to send the GLW battery pack back to Razor, and to receive a free replacement battery pack.

TOP PAW DOG BOWLS

PetSmart is recalling about 100,300 Top Paw Double Diner dog bowls because the gasket on the bottom of the dog bowls can come off, leaving an unfinished edge and posing a risk of laceration. The bowls were sold at PetSmart stores nationwide and online at [petsmart.com](https://www.petsmart.com) from October 2017 through June 2021 for about \$28.

What to do: Stop using the bowls and return them to any PetSmart store for a full refund. Call PetSmart at 888-839-9638 or go to [petsmart.com](https://www.petsmart.com) for details.

BAUER PROPANE HEATERS

Harbor Freight Tools is recalling about 19,000 Bauer forced air propane portable heaters because the fitting at the back of the heater can fail to be sufficiently tight, causing the heater to leak propane gas, posing a fire hazard. The heaters were sold at Harbor Freight Tools stores nationwide and online at [harborfreight.com](https://www.harborfreight.com) from November 2020 until March 5, 2021, for about \$100.

What to do: Stop using the propane portable heater and inspect it with a soapy-water leak test per instructions from Harbor Freight to determine that the fitting at the back of the unit is not leaking. Contact Harbor Freight Tools at 800-444-3353 or go to [harborfreight.com](https://www.harborfreight.com) for instructions and further details.

IVENA SHOWER BENCHES

Ivena is recalling about 70,000 teak shower benches because they can collapse during use, posing a fall hazard to the user. The benches were sold at Costco stores nationwide and online at [costco.com](https://www.costco.com) from October 2018 through June 2021 for about \$80 in stores and \$90 online.

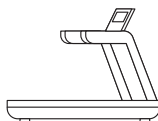
What to do: Stop using the bench and return it to Costco for a full refund. Call Ivena at 844-818-9388 or go to [ivenainternational.com](https://www.ivenainternational.com) for details.

DECEMBER
IS THE
BEST TIME
TO BUY ...

WIRELESS SPEAKERS



TREADMILLS



CAMERAS



FOOD PROCESSORS



PRODUCT UPDATE



THE LATEST
RATINGS FROM
OUR LABS

The Best Humidifiers in Our Tests

Here's what really works (and what doesn't) to keep your home comfortable all winter.

by Tobie Stanger



HOW COOL-MIST ULTRASONIC HUMIDIFIERS WORK

- 1** Water flows from a storage tank into a chamber in the base. Motors that run the unit sit inside the base.
- 2** A vibrating disc nebulizes the water into fine droplets using ultrasonic sound waves.
- 3** The droplets enter the air as mist. In some humidifiers, a small fan helps disperse the mist.
- 4** In some models, a cartridge removes minerals from the water before it's nebulized.

AS COLD WEATHER arrives and heating systems kick in, the humidity levels inside our homes usually drop. Skin can get itchy, lips chapped, throats parched.

By maintaining optimal humidity—between 30 and 50 percent in most places—a humidifier can relieve these problems and generally make your indoor environment more comfortable. By adding moisture to the air, a cool-mist humidifier may even help reduce swollen nasal passages—the kind you get from the common cold—and make breathing easier.

But when not used and cleaned properly, humidifiers can do more harm than good. They can even become a health hazard by dispersing mold and other microorganisms. “They can grow in the tank, become airborne, and possibly cause respiratory problems,” says Ashita Kapoor, CR’s associate director of product safety.

Here’s how to buy the right humidifier for your home—and how to maintain it.

The Types of Humidifiers

No matter which room size they are designed for, humidifiers in CR’s tests come in three basic categories.

COOL-MIST: These are either evaporative or ultrasonic. Evaporative units draw water through a wick or filter that captures dissolved particles; a fan disperses the resulting water vapor. Ultrasonic models emit tiny water droplets that turn to vapor after entering the air. They use either a small fan or no fan at all, so they’re less noisy, and they generally rank higher in CR’s humidifier ratings (see page 23).

WARM-MIST: Also known as steam vaporizers, these boil water and diffuse the steam. Some people find the heat comforting, especially in cold weather. But there are downsides. These units use more energy than cool-mist models. Also, the steam and hot water can scald, so they aren’t recommended for



PROTECT YOUR VALUABLES, TOO

Optimal humidity levels can help maintain items made of natural materials.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Acoustic guitars and other wooden instruments can easily fall out of tune, and potentially warp, if the air is too dry. Dedicate a space where you can keep the relative humidity between 45 and 55 percent, or buy a humidifier made for your instrument.

WOOD FLOORING

Excessive dryness can shrink floorboards, creating gaps and making them creak. To prevent that, maintain room humidity between 30 and 40 percent in cooler and drier seasons.

LEATHER GOODS

The pores in leather, which help it maintain a supple texture by letting in moisture, can shrink in dry environments, causing clothing, accessories, and upholstery to crack. One solution: Apply conditioner. And never leave leather outside.

FURNITURE

Wooden furniture can split if allowed to get too dry. Keep it out of direct sunlight and away from heat and air-conditioning vents.

homes with young children or pets. And they shouldn’t be used to relieve cold or flu symptoms: The Food and Drug Administration says steam can swell nasal passages, inhibiting breathing.

DUAL-MIST: You can set these to produce either cool or warm mist. They can also scald on the warm setting, so the same warnings about children and pets apply. Only a few of our rated humidifiers are dual-mist.

It’s worth noting that there’s one other option, which we don’t test: whole-house humidifiers, which draw from your water supply and distribute moisture via furnace air ducts. Though pricey, they can be a good option for homes heated by forced air, says Misha Kollontai, who leads CR’s humidifier testing. “They require far less maintenance than portable units,” he says.

What to Look For

Size, ease of use, and convenience features are the key variables.

GET THE RIGHT SIZE. A too-small unit simply won’t do the job; a too-big one can generate excessive moisture, setting the stage for dust mites and mold growth. Using our ratings, choose a model appropriate for your square footage.

PRIORITIZE EASE OF USE. Check CR’s convenience scores, which reflect user-friendly controls and displays, and—crucially—easy cleaning.

CONSIDER HELPFUL FEATURES. A built-in humidistat, which turns the unit off and on to maintain the desired humidity, is worthwhile. The ability to set the run time is also a plus, as is an empty-tank indicator or a sensor that shuts down the humidifier when the reservoir is empty.

FACTOR IN EXTRA COSTS. If your humidifier doesn’t have a humidistat, you can use a hygrometer—available online for as little as \$10—to monitor your room’s humidity levels. Check on manufacturer or vendor websites for the cost and life span of extras such as wicks and filters. Filters for the Honeywell HEV685W, \$100, for example, need to



be replaced every 30 to 60 days and cost about \$20 on Amazon.

Cool-mist ultrasonic units may require an extra outlay. They can potentially coat surfaces with a fine white dust. It's residue from dissolved minerals, left when the water droplets evaporate. The Consumer Product Safety Commission says the health effects of inhaling these

minerals aren't clear, but it recommends using distilled or demineralized water to minimize them.

At about \$1 per gallon and a typical use rate of, say, 2 gallons per day, the cost of distilled water can add up quickly. But James Dickerson, PhD, CR's chief scientific officer, suggests less expensive—and equally safe—

alternatives: Buy an ultrasonic humidifier with a built-in demineralization cartridge, such as the highly rated Vicks V5100NS, \$50, or use tap water that has been run through a filter that CR rates highly for reducing minerals and other undesirable materials. The highly rated undersink-mounted Culligan US-EZ-4 filter, \$85, fits the bill.

How to Keep Your Humidifier Clean

TO PREVENT THE GROWTH of mold and other contaminants, we recommend rinsing, towel-drying, and refilling your humidifier's tank with fresh water daily. Once a week the tank and the base's well need a deeper cleaning and sanitizing. See the steps below. Replace filters and wicks on the maker's recommended schedule.

Some manufacturers suggest using

bleach to sanitize. That approach can be effective, but James Dickerson, PhD, CR's chief scientific officer, points to its risks: "Bleach can degrade some plastics and seals that keep the unit watertight and structurally sound."

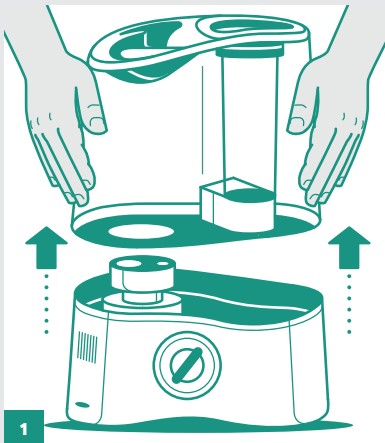
When you're ready to store your humidifier, first dry it thoroughly. And after taking it out of storage, fill the tank only when you're ready to use it.



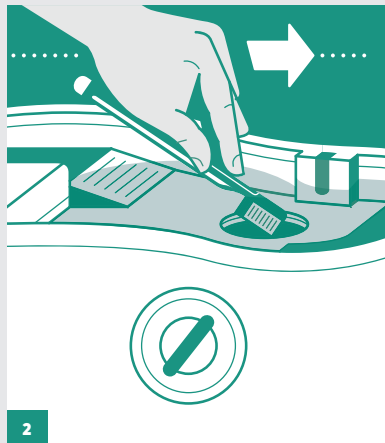
**30
MINUTES**

TOOLS NEEDED

- Water
- Towel
- White vinegar
- Empty bottle or measuring cup
- Toothbrush, cotton swabs, or another gentle cleaning tool



1 Remove tank from base. To the well of the base, add either 1 cup of vinegar or ½ cup each of vinegar and water.




2 Use your cleaning tool to reach into crevices and scrub off scale in the well. Rinse until no vinegar smell remains. Towel dry.



3 Pour 1 cup each of vinegar and water into the tank. Cap the tank and let soak for 20 minutes, swishing or shaking periodically. Pour out solution and rinse until no smell remains. Towel dry.

Ratings ➤ **Great Indoors.** A longer run time for your humidifier can mean less frequent fill-ups, but you'll still need to clean it regularly. And check out our noise scores if you'll be using the humidifier in a bedroom.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results					Features + Specs									
			Output	Convenience	Noise	Efficiency	Hard water	Humidistat accuracy	Style	Claimed humidification area	Claimed maximum run time (hr.)	Cord length (in.)	Cool-mist only	Dual-mist	Need to replace filter, wick, or cartridge	Nightlight or glow-in-the-dark	Automatic shutoff when empty

SMALL ROOM (26-299 SQUARE FEET)

✓ Babymoov Hygro (+)	95	\$80	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	Ultrasonic	215	22	58	•			•	•
💰 CVS Health GUL540V1	91	\$32	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	Ultrasonic	150	20	75	•			•	•
✓ Air Innovations MH-701B	90	\$90	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	Ultrasonic	178	96	62	•				•
✓ Crane Drop	88	\$50	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	Ultrasonic	250	24	70	•				•
💰 Honeywell HUL520	88	\$30	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	Ultrasonic	150	18	74	•				•
💰 Comfort Zone CZHD20 Tabletop	85	\$18	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	Ultrasonic	100	Not stated	57	•				•

MIDSIZED ROOM (300-499 SQUARE FEET)

✓ Honeywell HUL430	92	\$70	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	Ultrasonic	400	24	74	•			•	•
💰 TaoTronics TT_AH001	91	\$50	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	Ultrasonic	332	Not stated	61	•			•	•
✓ Pureguardian H3200WAR	88	\$100	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	Ultrasonic	440	100	60	•			•	•
💰 Vicks V5100NS	86	\$50	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	Ultrasonic	400	24	84	•		•		•
💰 Amazon Basics With Night Light and Aroma Diffuser, 4-Liter	85	\$39	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	Ultrasonic	400	24	64	•			•	•
✓ Air Innovations MH419	84	\$50	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	Ultrasonic	400	70	61	•				•
✓ Comfort Zone CZHD60	84	\$56	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	Ultrasonic	450	36	59	•			•	•
💰 Comfort Zone CZHD81	82	\$33	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	Ultrasonic	400	20	58	•			•	•

LARGE ROOM (500-999 SQUARE FEET)

💰 SPT SU-4010	79	\$75	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	Ultrasonic	500	12	75		•	•		•
Everlasting Comfort Ultrasonic	73	\$67	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	Ultrasonic	500	50	64	•			•	•
Pure Enrichment MistAire Eva 4-Speed	70	\$80	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	Evaporative	500	25	73	•		•	•	•

CONSOLE (1,000 SQUARE FEET AND MORE)

💰 Honeywell HEV685W	66	\$100	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	Evaporative	1,300	24	73	•		•		•
✓ Essick MA1201	64	\$140	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	Evaporative	2,500	24	66	•		•		•
✓ Vornado EVAP40	62	\$120	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	Evaporative	1,000	Not stated	83	•		•		

➤ Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at [CR.org/humidifiers](https://www.consumerreports.org/humidifiers).

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score is based on the performance of the product in all our tests. **Output** is gallons emitted daily per square foot in the unit's recommended humidification area. **Convenience** includes ease of operation and maintenance. **Noise** reflects sound level at highest setting. **Efficiency** is energy, in watt-hours, needed to emit a gallon of water. **Hard water** reflects output when using hard water. **Humidistat accuracy** is how closely the built-in moisture sensor reacts to humidity levels around the unit.

HEALTH
P. 28



◀ COOKING &
CLEANUP
P. 26



CR's Top

BY THE EDITORS OF
CONSUMER REPORTS



◀ AUTOS
P. 36

What makes CR's experts consider a product truly exceptional? Shining performance in our exhaustive tests and surveys, certainly, but also a host of other criteria, from including key safety features to offering top-notch reliability or a great value. Here, then, is our first annual roundup of the **88 most impressive products we've tested**, from appliances to autos, lawn equipment to laptops.

PLUS an inside look at the products that impressed our staffers so much that they bought them.



▲ OUTDOOR
LIVING &
YARD CARE
P. 34

Picks

BED, BATH &
LAUNDRY ▶
P. 30



▲ TECH
P. 32

COOKING & CLEANUP

WE LOVE ...

AMAZING APPLIANCES



STANDOUT
ELECTRIC RANGE

✓ **GE PROFILE**
PSS93YPFS \$2,400

88

OVERALL SCORE

▲ A slide-in style with stellar performance, this GE electric range has everything from a built-in temperature probe to an air fry setting in the oven, not to mention top-notch reliability.

GREAT GAS RANGE

✓ **SAMSUNG**
NX60T8711SS
\$1,980

82

TOP VALUE ELECTRIC

✓ **LG LREL6321S**
\$700

88



SUPER STORAGE
REFRIGERATOR

✓ **LG LRFVC2406S**
FRENCH-DOOR
\$3,600

84

▲ This top-rated LG refrigerator offers an appealing mix of performance and style—plus a trove of features, including an external water/ice dispenser, spillproof shelving, and two icemakers.



TOP VALUE
DISHWASHER

✓ **BOSCH**
ASCENTA
SHX3AR75UC \$705

88

▲ Squeaky-clean dishes are a given with this top-rated Bosch dishwasher. But it stands out for its host of high-end features at a competitive price.

SUPER-SLEEK
DISHWASHER

✓ **BOSCH 300**
SERIES
SHX863WD5N
\$950

84

EXCEPTIONALLY
QUIET DISHWASHER

✓ **THERMADOR**
DWHD650WFM
\$1,400

85

CR BEST BUY
SIDE-BY-SIDE FRIDGE

✓ **LG LSXS26326S**
\$1,495

78

RELIABLE TOP-
FREEZER FRIDGE

GE GTS22KSNRSS
\$983

69

WHAT'S NEW & COOL

SODA MAKER

SODASTREAM FIZZI
ONE TOUCH* \$130

► No need to press and hold to make seltzer with this machine: Our top-rated soda maker, the only electric model in our tests, can produce three levels of fizz with one touch. Of the four models we evaluated, this was the only one to earn top scores across the board.

*This product does not have an Overall Score.



I OWN THIS!

TOASTER OVEN

✓ **BREVILLE**
BOV650XL \$190

75



APPLIANCES YOU CAN COUNT ON to keep your food cold, your dinner hot, your dishes clean, and much more: Our team of home experts knows what you need. CR's top-performing picks—and our favorite cookware—can help you replace a failing model, upgrade well-worn basics, or try out a countertop game-changer.



AIR FRYER

✓ **GOURMIA GAF686**
DIGITAL AIR FRYER
\$70

80

▲ Crispy fries, wings, and more, with less oil? Our top air fryer offers a healthier path to commonly deep-fried foods—and it bakes, too.



COFFEE MAKER

✓ **NINJA SPECIALTY**
CM401 COMBO \$170

82

▲ More barista than brewer, this coffee maker comes with a built-in milk frother and a brew-over-ice mode, and can make everything from iced lattes to macchiatos.

WINNING COMBO

GOURMET COOKWARE

COATED CAST-IRON PAN

✓ **TRAMONTINA**
80131/066DS \$70

80



NONSTICK FRYING PAN

✓ **SWISS DIAMOND**
#6424 \$100

81



DUTCH OVEN

✓ **LE CREUSET**
SIGNATURE \$340

83



THE WORST LIST*

PRO-STYLE RANGE

FISHER & PAYKEL
OR30SCG4X1
\$4,200

33

TOASTER OVEN

GOWISE USA
GW44800-O
DELUXE \$150

35

BUILT-IN REFRIGERATOR

VIKING
PROFESSIONAL
7 SERIES
VBI7360WRSS
\$13,609

37

AIR FRYER

INSTANT VORTEX
4-IN-1 \$100

47

*These models had the lowest Overall Scores in their categories at press time. For the latest ratings and details on our tests, readers with a Digital or All Access membership can go to [CR.org](https://www.consumerreports.org).



Keith Flamer
Multimedia
Content
Creator, Home &
Appliances

After I joined Consumer Reports back in March, this was one of the first products I bought, on the recommendation of another CR staffer (and after checking the ratings). Since then, I've used it to level-up my limited cooking skills. The smart oven masterfully cooks salmon, chicken, and meatballs at a self-programmed time and temperature, and it's great for pizza. Even my teenagers are impressed with the results.



THERE'S ARGUABLY nothing more important than prioritizing your health and fitness, and CR's pros have just the products and services to make doing that easier. Here, you'll find the best choices for getting in shape, optimizing your nutrition, and staying safe in the process.

WE LOVE ...

HEALTHY GEAR

BEST BET TREADMILL

SOLE F80 \$1,600

86 OVERALL SCORE

► This folding treadmill impressed our testers by earning Excellent scores across the board. A CR Best Buy, it costs less than half the price of our highest-rated treadmill but is almost as highly rated overall.



FOR SERIOUS TRAINING (NON-FOLDING) TREADMILL

TRUE PERFORMANCE 100
\$3,900

87

BEST FOLDING TREADMILL UNDER \$1,000

SCHWINN 830 \$950

79

BEST CHOICE BLOOD PRESSURE MONITOR

OMRON SILVER BP5250 (Amazon) \$57

85

► The highly accurate Omron Silver blood pressure monitor scores just shy of the top spot in our rankings, and it's \$30 less than the highest-rated model, which makes it a great bet for most people. Note that it can record scores for only one user.



BEST BLOOD PRESSURE MONITOR FOR PETITE ARMS

OMRON PLATINUM BP5450 \$83

86

MOST PORTABLE BLOOD PRESSURE MONITOR

OMRON EVOLV BP7000 \$80

83

SUPER-CLEANING ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH

ORAL B IO7 SERIES \$200

83

◀ The Oral B electric toothbrush does an excellent job cleaning your teeth, and it's packed with features—including a sensor that tells you when you are pressing too hard so that you won't irritate your gums.

GENTLE ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH

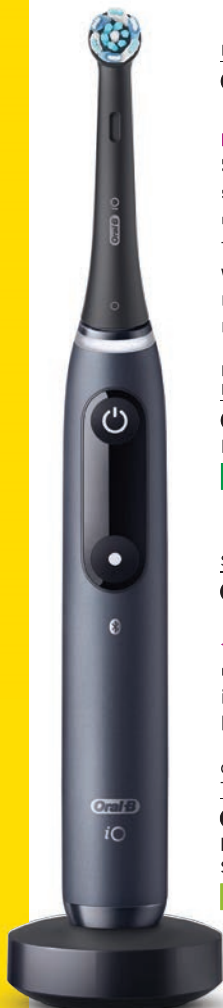
PHILIPS SONICARE PROTECTIVE CLEAN 6100
\$110

77

CR BEST BUY ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH

FAIRYWILL FW-508 \$28

71



THE WORST LIST

BLOOD PRESSURE MONITOR

OMRON HEALTHCARE HEART GUIDE BP8000-M \$500

19

YOGURT

LIBERTÉ WHOLE MILK YOGURT MADAGASCAR VANILLA BEAN
\$2.40

46

ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH

ARM & HAMMER SPINBRUSH PRO+ EXTRA WHITE SOFT \$9

49

BUDGET FOLDING TREADMILL

SUNNY SF-T7873
\$700

51



*This product does not have an Overall Score.

WHAT'S NEW & COOL



MEAL KIT
DELIVERY SERVICE

SUNBASKET*

\$131.88 plus \$9.99 shipping
Three kits per week
for four people.

▲ Meal kit users in a CR-experience study liked Sunbasket for its variety, portion sizes, and organic ingredients. And it made making healthy choices easier, CR's nutritionists said.



BIKE HELMET

✓ SENA R1 EVO \$160

79

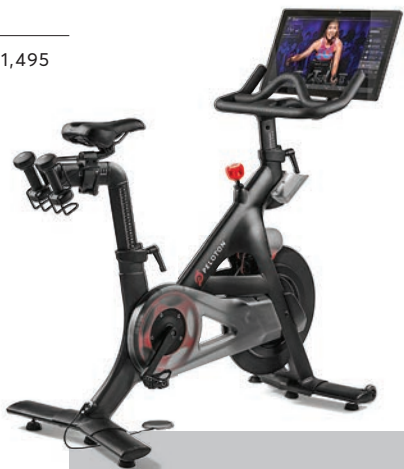
▲ In addition to top impact protection, this bike helmet has an LED safety light, speakers, and a microphone. Connect your phone via Bluetooth to play music or make calls, or use a mesh network to talk to nearby users of the same helmet.

EXERCISE BIKE

✓ PELOTON BIKE \$1,495

88

► Peloton changed the game for home exercisers with this exercise bike. It allows you to participate in high-quality classes that mimic a studio experience while riding on a top-quality exercise bike. It is by far our best-rated model.



WINNING COMBO

NUTRITIOUS SNACKS

Something chocolatey, something salty, something crunchy, something creamy—whatever you're craving, CR's nutritionists can recommend a healthy option for you to munch on. Whole-food ingredients and little to no added sugars make these good-for-you picks any time of day.

YOGURT

ICELANDIC PROVISIONS 1.5% MILK FAT TRADITIONAL SKYR YOGURT VANILLA \$1.75

82



POPCORN

ANGIE'S BOOMCHICKAPOP SEA SALT POPCORN* \$3.30

SNACK BAR

RXBAR CHOCOLATE SEA SALT PROTEIN BAR* \$2.20



I OWN THIS!

ADJUSTABLE DUMBBELLS

✓ CORE HOME FITNESS ADJUSTABLE DUMBBELLS \$350

83



Kevin Loria
Senior
Multimedia
Content Creator,
Health & Food

I thought these adjustable dumbbells looked promising but hadn't quite made the decision to buy them until I saw their great results in CR's tests. Then, when I got alerted to a discount offer on the manufacturer's website, I jumped on the opportunity. I'm so glad I did: They are amazing for a full-body workout—it's so easy to quickly adjust the weight, and they feel sturdy and well-balanced.



RECOMMENDED



CR BEST BUY



TOP PICKS

BED, BATH & LAUNDRY

WHAT'S NEW & COOL

COOLING PAD

CHILI OOLER COOLING PAD
FROM \$800

■ 5/5 OVERALL SCORE

► Do you tend to wake up too hot—or cold? The smartphone-controlled Ooler can cool or warm your bed to exactly the right temperature for you.



PILLOW

✓ **COOP HOME GOODS PILLOW**
\$62

90

▲ Now, you can even customize your pillow: The Coop comes with a bag of extra fill, so you can add or subtract filling to make it as full or as flat as you like.



BIDET ATTACHMENT

BRONDELL SIMPLESPA THINLINE* \$50

▲ This streamlined bidet attachment delivers a cleansing stream of water when you use the loo. It boasts the lowest price of the six models our panelists evaluated, and they found it very easy to use.

WINNING COMBO

SLEEP CHAMPS

Set yourself up for a great night's rest by practicing better sleep hygiene. Turn off those screens and make sure your room is dark and quiet. And treat yourself to a set of soft sheets that won't shrink in the wash, a soothing weighted blanket, and (if you're a data enthusiast) a sleep-tracking device.



SHEETS

💰 **L.L.BEAN PIMA COTTON SHEETS**
\$150 (FOR QUEEN SET)

74



SLEEP TRACKER

OURA RING* \$299

WEIGHTED BLANKET

YNM WEIGHTED BLANKET* \$50 FOR A 48x72-IN., 15-LB. BLANKET

THE WORST LIST

AIR PURIFIER

PURE ENRICHMENT PUREZONE MINI 2-IN-1 PEPERSAP \$40

11

SHEETS

PINZON BY AMAZON BED SHEETS \$53

25

SINGLE-FLUSH TOILET

MANSFIELD ALTO 137-160 \$240

38

INNERSPRING MATTRESS

BROOKLYN BEDDING SIGNATURE SERIES MED \$950

44

OUR TESTERS spend a lot of time evaluating the basics, like mattresses, washers, and toilets—so you can enjoy sweet dreams, clean clothes, and easy flushes, without a second thought.

WE LOVE ...

A CLEAN AND COMFY HOME



EXCEPTIONAL FRONT-LOAD WASHER/DRYER PAIR

💰 🌱 **LG WM4000HWA**
 ✓ **LG DLEX4000W** \$1,700

87

▲ This WiFi-enabled washer and dryer pair combines excellent performance with an attractive price. The washer meets our Green Choice standards for water and energy savings, and the dryer has Energy Star certification.



TOP-RATED INNERSPRING MATTRESS

✓ **AVOCADO GREEN** \$1,500

85

▲ The Avocado's innersprings are sandwiched by organic latex foam, then covered in organic cotton (hence the "green" in its name), and it offers superb support for most back and side sleepers.

BUDGET BUY FOAM MATTRESS

💰 **CASPER ORIGINAL** \$1,100

81

TOP-LOAD AGITATOR WASHER/DRYER PAIR

💰 **LGWT7305CW**
 ✓ **LG DLE7300WE** \$1,800

78

TOP-LOAD HE WASHER/DRYER PAIR

💰 **LG WT7100CW**
 💰 **LG DLE7100W** \$1,600

83



MOST IMPRESSIVE TOILET

✓ **KOHLER KELSTON K-3754 TOILET** \$275

79

▲ With Excellent ratings in our tests for solid-waste removal and bowl cleaning, the elongated-bowl Kohler Kelston toilet sits atop the competition.

BEST WALL-MOUNTED TOILET

DURAVIT STARCK 3 2226090092 WITH
 GEBERIT 111.335.00.5 UP3
 20 TANK TOILET \$700

75



I OWN THIS!

AIR PURIFIER

💰 **BLUEAIR 211+**
 \$300

85



Daisy Chan
 Deputy Editor,
 Home &
 Appliances

I decided to get an air purifier at the start of the pandemic last year, to help keep dust down when my whole family was at home all the time. I chose this model because it earned Excellent scores for particle removal in CR's tests. I've found it to be very quiet on the low setting, which is important because I run it 24/7, and it's simple to clean. That it also looks great in my living room is a total bonus!



IF YOU'RE RELYING on technology for more of your daily tasks and entertainment than ever before, you're not alone—and you're in luck. Our tech team's top picks showcase the latest, most reliable, easiest-to-use electronics for all your tasks.

WINNING COMBO

SIMPLE SECURITY

To secure your home, invest in a wireless camera to watch for intruders, a video doorbell to spot porch pirates, and a DIY security system to guard entrances. These are some of our favorites across those categories. (For the easiest user experience, choose which of the three you want most, then add other products from the same brand.)



SECURITY CAMERA

✓ **ARLO ESSENTIAL WIRELESS SECURITY CAMERA** \$130

74



VIDEO DOORBELL (WIRED)

✓ **GOOGLE NEST DOORBELL (WIRED)** \$230

83



DIY HOME SECURITY SYSTEM

💰 **RING ALARM SECURITY KIT 4K19SZ-0EN0 (2ND GEN.)** \$300

85

WE LOVE ... GREAT GADGETS

MOST VERSATILE LAPTOP

💰 **APPLE MACBOOK AIR 13-INCH (2020, M1)** \$1,000

81

OVERALL SCORE

► This Apple laptop ticks every box on our wish list. It's light (2.8 pounds) and powerful, and it has a battery that lasts so long (almost 13 hours in our labs) that you might even forget it's not plugged into the wall. The display is brighter than most, with an anti-reflective surface—a plus for viewing in a well-lit room or outside.



2-IN-1 DETACHABLE LAPTOP

✓ **MICROSOFT SURFACE PRO 7** \$770

66

BUDGET GAMING LAPTOP

💰 **HP PAVILION GAMING 16 A0032DX** \$980

70

I OWN THIS!

SMOKE/CO2 DETECTOR

GOOGLE NEST PROTECT: SMOKE + CARBON MONOXIDE \$110

62



Daniel Wroclawski
Multimedia Content
Creator, Home &
Appliances

I outfitted my home with several Nest Protects, all of which I can control from the Nest smartphone app, so I get an alert wherever I am if my alarms go off. An added bonus: I can hush the alarms from the Nest app, which has saved me more than a few times when I've produced a little more smoke than intended while cooking.

WHAT'S NEW & COOL

▼ A fast, reliable home WiFi network is a must for many people, and this mesh router delivers—and for a reasonable price, too. With three “beacons” you place around your home to evenly distribute WiFi signals, it helps eliminate dead zones.

MESH WIFI ROUTER

✓ **TP-LINK DECO WHOLE HOME** \$170

76



SMART THERMOSTAT

✓ **GOOGLE NEST LEARNING THERMOSTAT** \$250

83



◀ Smart thermostats can cut your utility bills by automating heating and cooling, and this Google Nest model is no exception. It's one of the best we've tested at learning your household routine, so it can adjust energy output to your actual needs.



TRUE WIRELESS HEADPHONES

💰 **1MORE COMFOBUDS PRO** \$110

72

▲ Want noise-canceling headphones for less? The 1MORE ComfoBuds Pro true wireless earbuds are impressive for both audio quality and sound blocking—and cost about half what you'd pay for competing products, including the AirPods Pro.

THE WORST LIST

SMART THERMOSTAT

RADIO THERMOSTAT CT50 \$65

22

VIDEO DOORBELL

NETVUE BELLE AI \$110

28

12- TO 13-INCH LAPTOP

HYUNDAI HYFLIP 13 \$240

33

MESH ROUTER

UBIQUITI NETWORKS AMPLIFI (AC1750) (3-PACK) \$350

56



SMARTTEST SMARTPHONE

✓ **APPLE IPHONE 12 PRO MAX** \$1,100

86

◀ This is the iPhone to pick if you don't want to compromise. The screen is big, bright, and super-sharp, and the photos that the three rear-facing cameras turn out are keepsake-worthy. Great battery life (41 hours) rounds out the package.



PICTURE-PERFECT TV

✓ **LG OLED65BXP UA** \$1,800

86

◀ This 65-inch set, in LG's least-expensive 4K OLED series, delivers top-notch picture quality and effective HDR performance, which can produce vibrant, colorful images when done well. It also produces great sound.

CR BEST BUY PHONE

✓ **ONEPLUS 8 PRO PHONE** \$700

84

BEST ANDROID PHONE

✓ **SAMSUNG GALAXY NOTE20 ULTRA 5G** \$1,200

85

BEST 70-INCH+ TV FOR THE MONEY

✓ **TCL 75R635** \$1,600

68

46- TO 52-INCH TV WITH GREAT SOUND

✓ **LG 50UP8000PUA** \$500

69



WINNING COMBO

YARDWORK HELPERS

Keeping your property looking neat and tidy isn't always simple, but using this one-stop-shopping lineup of tools is. That's because Ego lawn tools use an interchangeable 56-volt battery that powers its entire collection of outdoor power tools, including the stellar chainsaw, string trimmer, and leaf blower here.



CHAINSAW

✓ **EGO CS1804**

\$349

82

OVERALL SCORE

STRING TRIMMER

✓ **EGO ST1502SA**

\$170

92

LEAF BLOWER

✓ **EGO LB5302**

\$200

80

THE WORST LIST

WIRELESS SPEAKER

BILLBOARD BB742 \$30

29

BATTERY PUSH MOWER

SUN JOE MJ401C-X \$190

40

BATTERY STRING TRIMMER

BLACK+DECKER LST201 \$80

42

WHAT'S NEW & COOL

WIRELESS AND BLUETOOTH SPEAKER

✓ **JBL BOOMBOX 2**

\$499

60

▼ A reimagining of the classic boom boxes of the 1980s, this JBL wireless speaker retains all the fun—volume galore and loads of bass—and adds a rechargeable battery and Bluetooth connectivity.



GENERATOR

✓ **RYOBI RY14022X** \$550

84

▲ This capable midsize model costs far less than the competition. It offers a high output and clean, reliable power. It's designed to produce less carbon monoxide, and it features an essential safety shutoff.

SMART SPRINKLER CONTROLLER

ORBIT B-HYVE 57950 \$110

69

▼ Smart sprinkler controllers, like this top-rated Orbit model, make it a cinch to get a green lawn and save water. How? They use rainfall data to make sure they never overwater.



ARE

EASIER UPKEEP and more enjoyable outside hangout time: What's not to like about those goals? The great lawn care, grilling, and entertaining gear our pros have selected here will help you make the most of every aspect of your outdoor experience.

WE LOVE ... TOP-NOTCH TOOLS



TOP PICK EXTERIOR PAINT

✓ **BEHR MARQUEE EXTERIOR PAINT**
(Home Depot) \$51

76

◀ Our accelerated exterior paint weathering tests simulate the effects of sun, rain, wind, and snow on a vertical wall. But Behr Marquee still looked great after the equivalent of nine years' exposure.

LONG-LASTING SOLID WOOD STAIN

✓ **BEHR PREMIUM SOLID COLOR WATERPROOFING STAIN & SEALER**
(Home Depot) \$42

82

BEST BUDGET GAS GRILL

💰 **EVEN EMBERS GAS8560AS**
MIDSIZED GAS GRILL \$395

78

◀ A terrific grill that outperforms models costing five times as much, the Even Embers heats quickly and evenly to a broad range of temperatures, making it adept at everything from burgers to brisket.

BEST CHARCOAL GRILL

✓ **DYNA-GLO DGN576DNC-D**
\$230

81



TOP-RATED GAS SELF-PROPELLED MOWER

✓ **HONDA HRX217K6HZA**
\$870

87

▲ We know this mower is pricey. But it's arguably worth it: Mulching and bagging are rated Excellent, reliability is second to none, and the rear-wheel drive helps manage uneven terrain.

BUDGET BATTERY-POWERED MOWER

💰 **RYOBI RY401140US**
\$500

81

I OWN THIS!

KAMADO GRILL

BIG GREEN EGG \$1,030

56



Paul Hope
Multimedia
Content
Creator, Home &
Appliances

I got my Big Green Egg when it was the only kamado grill on the market, and its performance is still solid. But newer models—like CR's top-rated Kamado Joe Classic II 18" KJ23RHC, \$1,300—offer better convenience features and easier cleaning (and higher Overall Scores) than the Egg. And new non-ceramic models, like the Broil King Keg 911470, \$850, are lower-priced.



OUR AUTOS TEAM puts every model that CR rates through its paces at our track (and beyond), to bring you the best, safest, most reliable cars on the market. During all that testing, some models stand out to our pros—like the special vehicles we're highlighting here.



WINNING COMBO

FAMILY GARAGE

Different needs require different kinds of vehicles—and each should be reliable, and efficient. The Carnival is ideal for family road trips. The smooth-riding AWD Legacy sedan is ideal for year-round commutes. And the Civic meets our tough criteria for teen safety.

MINIVAN

✓ **KIA CARNIVAL** \$32,100–\$46,100

77



WE LOVE ...

SMART BUYS

OVER \$30,000

MIDSIZE SUV

✓ **KIA TELLURIDE**
\$32,790–\$44,590

97

OVERALL SCORE

◀ The Telluride midsize 3-row SUV shines in a competitive category, with its slick V6, comfortable seats, versatile interior, and thoughtful touches. It's hard to find a fault with this do-it-all model.

MIDSIZE SUV

✓ **LEXUS RX**
\$45,320–\$55,790

80

SMALL SUV

✓ **SUBARU FORESTER**
\$25,195–\$35,295*

89

*Most versions are over \$30,000.



UNDER \$30,000

MIDSIZE SEDAN

✓ **TOYOTA CAMRY**
\$25,295–\$35,720

88

▲ The Camry name is synonymous with smart, reliable family transportation, and for good reason: Typically priced under \$30K, this midsize sedan has a comfortable ride, a quiet cabin, and great fuel economy.

SMALL CAR

✓ **TOYOTA COROLLA**
\$20,075–\$28,360

77

SUBCOMPACT SUV

✓ **MAZDA CX-30**
\$22,050–\$34,050

75



MIDSIZED SEDAN

✓ **SUBARU LEGACY** \$22,995-\$36,190

84



USED, RELIABLE, AND SAFE FOR TEEN DRIVERS

HONDA CIVIC (2012-2015)* \$7,725-\$19,100

*Used cars do not have an Overall Score.



WHAT'S NEW & COOL

These three standout hybrid models have something else in common: Each has earned CR's Green Choice designation, which highlights the top 20 percent of vehicles on the market with the cleanest emissions. Fuel efficiency now comes in every size.



SMALL SUV

✓ **HYUNDAI TUCSON HYBRID**, 35 MPG
\$29,050-\$37,350

84



MIDSIZED SUV

✓ **TOYOTA VENZA**, 37 MPG
\$32,670-\$40,000

78



THREE-ROW SUV

✓ **TOYOTA HIGHLANDER HYBRID**, 35 MPG
\$38,850-\$50,960

83

THE WORST LIST

SUBCOMPACT SUV

FIAT 500X
\$26,275-\$31,455

31

LUXURY SUV

LAND ROVER RANGE ROVER EVOQUE
\$43,300-\$53,400

41

MIDSIZED SUV

FORD EXPLORER
\$32,925-\$54,600

42

I OWN THIS!



Amanda Lecky
Deputy Editor,
Print Publications

COMPACT SUV

✓ **MAZDA CX-5**
\$25,370-\$37,505

83

When it was time to hand down my much-loved 2012 Toyota Highlander to my son, I replaced it with a 2021 Mazda CX-5. I chose it for its great scores in CR's tests and surveys, and for the mix of safety and luxury features at a price that worked for me. My husband liked my CX-5 so much, when his car lease was up a couple of months later, he got one, too!

CR tested for heavy metals in 15 herbs and spices, from basil and black pepper to saffron and turmeric.

SEASON WITH CARE

The Trouble With Spices



BY LISA L. GILL • PHOTOGRAPH BY BEN GOLDSTEIN

CR found lead, arsenic, and cadmium in popular brands of herbs and spices. Here's how to stay safe.



Almost a third of the 126 products CR tested had levels of arsenic, cadmium, and lead combined that were high enough to raise health concerns.



Open a drawer or cabinet in any kitchen in the U.S., and you're likely to find several jars of dried herbs and spices.

Jessica Clark, a mother of two from Lincoln, Neb., says she uses them so often that she buys in bulk and mixes her own special blends. Erica Burger of Carmel, Ind., says she became “hooked” on a 21-spice blend—so much so that she now uses it in all sorts of dishes. “This is so flavorful, I use less salt in general,” she says. And Joey Davis, who grew up in San Diego, “where Mexican food is on every corner,” and whose Jamaican wife “puts habanero in everything, including cucumber salad,” says that in his home, “you can’t imagine any dish without spices and herbs.”

For many of us, spices play a large role in our cooking and in our family’s lives. A recipe may call for just a pinch or three of cumin, cayenne, and garlic powder, but what would your grandmother’s arroz con pollo be without them? And what about your secret Simon & Garfunkel fish rub—you know, the one with parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme?

Yes, those seasonings really can add spice to our lives, filling our kitchens with tempting aromas and creating memories of people and places linked to special meals. But along with the flavor and memories, herbs and spices could also add something less savory to your diet: potentially dangerous heavy metals.

That’s according to Consumer Reports’ tests of 15 types of dried herbs and spices used in a variety of cuisines. We looked at 126 individual products from national and private-label brands, such as Great Value (Walmart), La Flor, McCormick, Penzeys, Spice Islands, and Trader Joe’s.

Roughly one-third of the tested products, 40 in total, had high enough levels of arsenic, lead, and cadmium combined, on average, to pose a health concern for children when regularly consumed in typical serving sizes. Most raised concern for adults, too.

For two herbs, thyme and oregano, all the products we tested had levels that CR experts say are concerning.

In 31 products, levels of lead were so high that they exceeded the maximum amount anyone should have in a day, according to CR’s experts.

Also troubling: There was no single predictor of which products contained higher levels of heavy metals—for example, brand name didn’t matter, and neither did “organic” or “packed in USA” claims.

The good news? Many products performed well in the tests. In seven of the 15 types of spices tested, all the brands had heavy metal levels below our thresholds for concern, and in most others, we found at least one brand that fit into our No Concern category.

And none of the tested spices were contaminated with salmonella bacteria, which may cause foodborne illness.

A single serving of any herb or spice CR tested is unlikely to cause harm, says James E. Rogers, PhD, director of food safety and testing at CR. Still, some products contain enough heavy metals, even in the small amounts used in cooking, to raise a concern when used regularly.

“When people think about heavy metals in their diet, if they do at all, it’s probably the lead in their drinking water or arsenic in their children’s fruit juices or cereals,” Rogers says. “But our tests show that dried herbs and spices can be a surprising, and worrisome, source for children and adults.”

THE THREAT OF HEAVY METALS

Frequent exposure to even small amounts of lead, arsenic, cadmium, and other heavy metals is dangerous, in part because it’s difficult for the human body to break them down or excrete them. And over time, exposure to those heavy metals can harm health. In children, it can affect brain development, increasing the risk for behavioral problems and lower IQ. In adults, it can contribute to central nervous system problems, reproductive problems, and hypertension, and can damage kidney and immune function.

“Since the risks are serious,” Rogers says, “it pays to limit your intake of heavy metals as much as possible.”

Heavy metals can show up in food if the water or soil where food is grown contains them naturally or is contaminated because of pesticides or industrial uses, says Tunde Akinleye, a CR chemist who oversaw the testing. Heavy metals may also get into food, including spices, during manufacturing—from processing equipment or packaging, for example.

Laura Shumow, executive director of the American Spice Trade Association, says it's almost impossible to rid spices of all heavy metals because of "the unavoidable presence in the environments where they are grown." She also says the amount of heavy metals absorbed from the soil, and the part of the plant where they can end up, differs from plant to plant. The trade group offers spice companies guidance on how to limit contaminants that they can implement with their suppliers.

Shumow says that according to a recent risk analysis by the ASTA, spices make up less than 0.1 percent of dietary lead exposure in children ages 1 to 6. And even for adults, she says, the ASTA believes the risk is low "in large part because spices are a very small component of the diet."

But CR's data underscore a broader problem. "People reach for the herbs and spices in their kitchens multiple times a day," Akinleye says. And for certain spices, just one serving—¾ teaspoon or more—per day leaves little room for heavy metal exposure from other sources. For example, CR's previous testing found that some brands of fruit juice, baby food, and rice contain troubling amounts of heavy metals.

And smaller amounts of certain spices could be a concern if they are combined with others in a recipe. For example, a dish that has just ¼ teaspoon each of Great Value (Walmart) Chili Powder, Trader Joe's Organic Cumin, and La Flor Oregano per serving would contain enough arsenic, cadmium, and lead to pose a concern.

Other research also suggests that spices can contribute to heavy metal exposure. For instance, a 2018 study in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* found high lead levels in 22 percent of food samples—mostly spices and herbal remedies—taken from homes of children with lead poisoning in North Carolina.

IS TURMERIC GOOD FOR YOU?

Almost half the turmeric products CR tested had concerning levels of heavy metals.

BRIGHT YELLOW TURMERIC is a staple in Asian, Caribbean, Indian, and Middle Eastern dishes, and for hundreds of years, it has been prized for its health properties. Thanks to its healing reputation, in recent years the number of products that contain this spice—from drinks to cereals to dietary supplements—has increased.

With its rise in popularity comes concern about heavy metals. Of the 126 products in CR's tests, La Flor Turmeric stood out because it raised the highest concern from arsenic, cadmium, and lead combined. (La Flor did not return repeated requests for comment.) Three other turmeric products CR tested fell into our Some Concern category.

"People taking turmeric for health reasons may use much greater amounts than people who use it when cooking," says James E. Rogers, PhD, director of food safety and testing at CR. "And the more of any heavy metal you are exposed to, from any source, the greater your risk."

WHAT DOES THE SCIENCE SAY?

People have long turned to turmeric to treat a variety of ills, especially pain from inflammation. And lab studies suggest that curcumin—thought to be turmeric's active ingredient—does act against inflammatory cells. But it is less clear whether that translates to benefits in people. In a 2019

study, curcumin was as effective as an anti-inflammatory pain reliever for knee osteoarthritis. But neither treatment offered much relief. And an earlier study of more than 600 people found no evidence that curcumin pills eased inflammation compared with a placebo.

IS IT SAFE TO COOK WITH?

Occasional use of turmeric with heavy metal levels high enough to raise a concern is unlikely to pose much danger. But it is better to use a product from our tests that had very low levels, Rogers says, especially if you regularly cook with turmeric or use it in large amounts for potential health benefits.

WHAT ABOUT SUPPLEMENTS?

Previous testing by CR found that supplements—including turmeric and curcumin products—are sometimes high in lead or bacteria. And unlike with drugs, the Food and Drug Administration does not verify that supplements contain what their labels say they do. So careful shopping is key. Look for a seal from ConsumerLab.com, NSF International, UL, or U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP). Such a seal doesn't guarantee that a product is safe or that it does what it's claimed to do, but it offers some assurance that you're getting what's on the label.

CR'S SPICE TEST RESULTS

CONSUMER REPORTS tested 126 herbs and spices from 38 brands for arsenic, cadmium, and lead. (We did not test spices that tend to be used in baking, such as cinnamon and nutmeg.) We tested two or three samples from different lots of each product. Our findings are a spot check of the market and cannot be used to draw definitive conclusions about brands. The products are organized alphabetically by type. Within each group, the products are listed according to the degree of concern. Regularly consuming $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon or more daily of a product in one of the concerning categories could, over time, pose a health risk to children as a result of the combined levels of the three heavy metals. Unless noted, they could also pose a risk to adults. The more red boxes next to a product, the higher the concern.

✓ NO CONCERN ■ SOME CONCERN ■ ■ MODERATE CONCERN ■ ■ ■ HIGH CONCERN

► BASIL

Simply Organic Basil	✓
365 Whole Foods Market Basil*	■
Great Value (Walmart) Basil Leaves	■
McCormick Culinary Ground Basil (Albahaca Molida)	■
Sausage Maker Ground Basil	■
Litehouse Freeze Dried Basil	■
Morton & Bassett Basil*	■
Spice Islands Sweet Basil	■ ■

► BLACK PEPPER

Tone's Ground Black Pepper	✓
El Guapo Black Pepper Ground (Pimienta Negra Molida)	✓
Badia Ground Black Pepper (Pimienta Negra Molida)	✓
Casablanca Ground Black Pepper (Pimienta Negra)	✓
Trader Joe's Organic Ground Black Pepper	✓
Kirkland Signature (Costco) Fine Ground Black Pepper	✓
Simply Organic Black Pepper	✓

► BLACK PEPPER *continued*

Penzeys Spices Tellicherry Black Pepper Fine Shaker Grind	✓
Great Value (Walmart) Ground Black Pepper	✓
McCormick Pure Ground Black Pepper	✓

► CHILI POWDER

Morton & Bassett Chili Powder	✓
Spice Islands Chili Powder	✓
Simply Organic Chili Powder	✓
Badia Polvo de Chili Powder	✓
Swad Chilli Powder	✓
Good & Gather (Target) Chili Powder	✓
Gebhardt Chili Powder	✓
El Guapo Ground California Chili (Chile California Molido)	✓
McCormick Dark Chili Powder	✓
Great Value (Walmart) Chili Powder*	■

► CORIANDER

Simply Organic Coriander	✓
Happy Belly (Amazon) Ground Coriander	✓

► CORIANDER *continued*

Badia Ground Coriander (Culantro Molido)	✓
Great Value (Walmart) Organic Ground Coriander	✓
Spice Islands Ground Coriander	✓
Morton & Bassett Ground Coriander	✓
Laxmi Brand Coriander Powder	✓
Penzeys Spices Coriander Ground	✓

► CUMIN

Spice Islands Ground Cumin Seed	✓
Simply Organic Ground Cumin	✓
El Guapo Cumin (Comino)	✓
Morton & Bassett Ground Cumin	✓
McCormick Ground Cumin	✓
365 Whole Foods Market Cumin Ground	✓
Bolner's Fiesta Ground Comino (Cumin)*	■
Badia Ground Cumin (Comino Molido)*	■
Great Value (Walmart) Ground Cumin*	■
Trader Joe's Organic Ground Cumin	■

► CURRY POWDER

Simply Organic Curry Powder	✓
Great Value (Walmart) Organic Curry Powder	✓
Morton & Bassett Curry	✓
Spice Islands Curry Powder	✓
Jamaican Choice Jamaican Curry Powder	✓
McCormick Curry Powder	✓
Happy Belly (Amazon) Curry Powder	✓
Caribbean Rhythms Mild Curry Powder	✓
Badia Jamaican Style Curry Powder	✓

► GARLIC POWDER

365 Whole Foods Market Organic Garlic Powder	✓
Lawry's Casero Garlic Powder (Ajo en Polvo)	✓
McCormick Garlic Powder	✓
Simply Organic Garlic Powder	✓
Bolner's Fiesta Garlic Powder	✓
Kirkland Signature (Costco) Granulated California Garlic	✓
Great Value (Walmart) Granulated Garlic	✓
La Flor Garlic Powder (Ajo en Polvo)	✓
Badia Garlic Powder (Ajo en Polvo)	✓
Spice Supreme Garlic Powder	✓

► GINGER

Simply Organic Ginger	✓
365 Whole Foods Market Ground Ginger	■
Great Value (Walmart) Organic Ground Ginger	■
La Flor Ground Ginger (Jenjibre)	■
Tone's Ground Ginger	■
Badia Ground Ginger (Jengibre Molido)	■
Spice Islands Ground Ginger	■
Morton & Bassett Ground Ginger	■
McCormick Ground Ginger	■

► OREGANO

Simply Organic Oregano	■
McCormick Ground Oregano	■
Penzeys Spices Oregano Turkish	■
Spice Islands Oregano	■
Badia Ground Oregano (Molido)	■
Sadaf Oregano Leaves (Origan)	■
La Flor Ground Oregano	■ ■ ■

► PAPRIKA

Morton & Bassett Paprika	✓
Simply Organic Paprika	✓
Spice Islands Paprika	✓
365 Whole Foods Market Paprika	✓
Great Value (Walmart) Organic Paprika*	■
Badia Paprika (Pimenton)*	■
Pride of Szeged Sweet Hungarian Style Paprika	■
McCormick Paprika	■

► SAFFRON

Pacific Plaza Imports Full Thread Spanish Saffron	✓
Krokos Kozanis Organic Greek Red Saffron in Filaments	✓
Vigo Imported Saffron	✓
Badia Pure Selected Saffron (Azafran)	✓
McCormick Gourmet All Natural Spanish Saffron	✓
Sadaf Pure, Premium Saffron Thread	✓

► SESAME SEED

Sincerely Nuts Sesame Hulled	✓
Woodstock Organic Sesame Tahini Unsalted	✓
Al Wadi Al Akhdar Tahina 100% Ground Sesame	✓
Grain Brain Organic Hulled Sesame Seeds	✓
Bob's Red Mill Premium Hulled White Sesame Seeds	✓
Penzeys Spices Sesame Seeds White Hulled	✓

► SESAME SEED *continued*

Roland Tahini Pure Ground Sesame Seed	✓
JFC Premium Roasted White Sesame Seed	✓
Sadaf Sesame Seed Raw	✓

► THYME

Spice Islands Ground Thyme	■
Morton & Bassett Ground Thyme	■
McCormick Ground Thyme	■
Tone's Ground Thyme	■ ■
Happy Belly (Amazon) Ground Thyme	■ ■ ■

► TURMERIC

Laxmi Brand Turmeric Powder	✓
Spice Islands Turmeric	✓
Sadaf Turmeric Powder (Curcuma)	✓
Simply Organic Turmeric	✓
Badia Ground Turmeric (Curcuma Molida)	✓
Kirkland Signature (Costco) Ground Turmeric	■
Morton & Bassett Turmeric	■
McCormick Ground Turmeric	■
La Flor Ground Turmeric	■ ■ ■

► WHITE PEPPER

Great Value (Walmart) Organic Ground White Pepper	✓
Penzeys Spices White Pepper Indonesia Fine Ground	✓
Badia Ground White (Pepper Pimienta Blanca Molida)	✓
Morton & Bassett Ground White Pepper	✓
Spice Islands Ground White Pepper	✓
Sadaf Ground White Pepper (Poivre Blanc Moulu)	✓
McCormick Ground White Pepper	✓
La Flor White Pepper	✓

*Did not reach threshold for posing concern to adults.

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41]

And a 2010 study linked a case of lead poisoning in a 12-month-old Massachusetts boy in part to turmeric used by the family. Five similar cases were later discovered in Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, and New York. And more than a dozen turmeric products have been recalled since 2011.

CR's tests, however, demonstrate that it is possible for spice companies to limit heavy metals in their products. "About two-thirds of the spices we tested did not have concerning levels of heavy metals," Akinleye says. "So we know spices don't have to have worrisome amounts of lead or arsenic or any other heavy metal."

SPICES GROWN ABROAD

The Food and Drug Administration is responsible for the safety of spices. The agency hasn't set limits on heavy metals in food, except in a few cases, such as arsenic in infant rice cereal and lead in candy. But spice companies are required to periodically conduct a food safety analysis, which includes controlling chemical hazards such as heavy metals, says Brian Ronholm, director of food policy at CR.

"Heavy metal content testing is part of a wider risk assessment process the FDA may undertake if it determines that sample collection and analysis is warranted for a specific shipment," an agency spokesperson said.

Importantly, the FDA can also test spices shipped to the U.S. and block products if it identifies a health risk. That's important because most spices sold in the U.S. are grown abroad—in countries such as China, India, and Vietnam—and some research suggests that oversight of food production there is sometimes less rigorous.

However, while you might want to know where the spices you use are

THE RISKY SPICE RACK

Here are the 40 products that had concerning levels of arsenic, cadmium, and lead combined.

Organic herbs and spices were as likely as conventional ones to have higher levels of heavy metals.



All the thyme and oregano products tested had concerning levels of heavy metals.



grown, that's not easy to determine. CR's food safety experts found many labeled as "packed in USA," but no other information was listed. Other products listed multiple countries, which suggests the final product was a mixture of spices from more than one source.

Currently, about two dozen spice companies from 11 countries are subject

to import alerts for lead contamination, which signal to regulators that they can detain those products. But that represents a fraction of the herbs and spices shipped to the U.S. In addition, the limited testing the FDA has done on spices has been focused on harmful bacteria, such as salmonella, not heavy metals, Ronholm says.



SELF-POLICING

The lack of regulation leaves much of the monitoring of heavy metal levels to spice companies. CR contacted all the ones with products in our tests to see how they limited heavy metals.

Of the companies that replied to our

questions—Al Wadi Al Akhdar, Costco, Bolner's Fiesta, Gebhardt, Litehouse, McCormick, Roland Foods, Spice Islands, Target, and Whole Foods—a few said they require their suppliers to have a program for controlling or testing for heavy metals. But only three—Al Wadi Al Akhdar, Bolner's Fiesta, and McCormick—specifically said they test products in their manufacturing plants for heavy metals.

Costco, Litehouse, and McCormick said their goal is to have heavy metals as close to zero as possible, but no company provided the thresholds they consider acceptable.

For years, California has required that products that exceed limits for substances known to cause cancer or reproductive harm, including heavy metals, carry a warning label. But New York is currently the only state to have enacted limits for heavy metals in spices.

It set them after issuing recalls of more than 100 spices because of heavy metal contamination since 2016, says Jola Szubielski, a spokesperson for the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Once enforcement begins, the state can force a recall of products with elevated levels of heavy metals.

SEASON SAFELY

While the risk of heavy metals in spices and herbs is real, limiting your risk doesn't mean dooming yourself to a life of bland food or giving up old family favorites. Follow these tips.

Choose products with the lowest levels of heavy metals. CR's tests found at least one product that fit in our No Concern category for every spice and herb we tested except oregano and thyme.

Focus on spices and herbs that are lower in heavy metals. These were black pepper, coriander, curry powder,

garlic powder, saffron, sesame seeds, and white pepper. That doesn't mean that every brand of these herbs and spices is low in heavy metals, because we didn't test them all. But it is easy to find low-risk versions of those spices.

Don't assume some brands are safer than others. CR's tests could not determine whether one brand was consistently better or worse than any other. And organic products did not have consistently lower levels than conventionally grown ones. While that might surprise some, CR's Ronholm says the USDA's organic standards don't include heavy metal testing.

Grow and dry your own. That might be a particularly good idea if you use a lot of basil, oregano, and thyme; in our tests all or almost all the brands tested were high in heavy metals. See "Your DIY Guide to Herbs and Spices," on page 46.

Think twice about bringing back spices from abroad. Heavy metal content can be much higher in those spices, according to other research. U.S. companies may buy the highest-quality spices to import, Ronholm says, which could leave lower-quality spices to be sold in the country of origin.

Consider your total potential exposure to heavy metals.

This is especially important if you have kids at home. Our tests are a reminder that you should take steps to limit your potential exposure from heavy metals from all sources.

That means not only choosing seasonings that pose little risk when you can but also, for example, testing your water for lead and arsenic and, if levels are high, installing a water filter. For details, go to [CR.org/watertest1221](https://www.consumerreports.org/watertest1221).

And if you have young children at home, see CR's advice on choosing juices and infant cereals that are low in heavy metals at [CR.org/fruitjuice1221](https://www.consumerreports.org/fruitjuice1221) and [CR.org/babyfood1221](https://www.consumerreports.org/babyfood1221).

YOUR DIY GUIDE TO HERBS AND SPICES

WHEN KAREN WASHINGTON, a food activist and farmer, recalls holiday meals with her family, one herb stands out: thyme. “What’s a Thanksgiving turkey without thyme?” she asks. And even at other times of the year, it’s the most common herb used in her kitchen, she says. But if you use a lot of thyme—or basil or oregano—and are concerned that most or all brands CR tested had high levels of heavy metals, don’t worry—you don’t have to skip them. Instead, Washington says, grow your own in your yard, on your patio or porch, or in a sunny spot inside. “No matter how small or how big, the fact that you can control even part of your food system by growing, nourishing, and harvesting something is a powerful act,” says Washington, co-founder of the nonprofit organization Black Urban Growers and co-owner of Rise & Root Farm in Chester, N.Y. And if you want to dry those herbs for future use, she suggests this: Put them in a dry paper bag for several weeks. For more on how to grow and dry herbs, and store those you buy at the store, read on. —Lisa L. Gill and Tanya A. Christian



Grow Your Own

► Here’s what you’ll need to do, in addition to buying seeds or starter plants.

PICK A SUNNY, WARM SPOT

An indoor windowsill or a small outdoor space will do, as long as the location you choose gets at least 6 hours of sunlight each day. Too dark inside? Try a grow kit. These

often come with lights, plus some are hydroponic, meaning they require only water, not soil. If you can, keep the temperature at about 60° F to 70° F and you can grow indoors all year.

GET POTS WITH GOOD DRAINAGE

Standing water is a no-no for herbs—it promotes root rot. To encourage drainage, put a few rocks at the bottom of a pot that also has a hole in it, and raise it slightly on a saucer.

PRO TIP: Each type of herb should have its own pot (don’t crowd the plants, though!) because needs may differ.

USE GOOD SOIL

If you want herbs that are free of heavy metals, you’ll need soil free of them, too. If you’re buying potting soil, look for a product that carries the OMRI Listed seal, which means it has been assessed for heavy metals by the Organic Materials Review Institute. If you are using your own dirt, consider testing it. You can buy a kit at many hardware

stores or online, though it may screen only for lead. Or contact your local agricultural cooperative extension office for advice on testing.

CHECK YOUR WATER

If you’re not sure whether your water is free of heavy metals, you can test that, too. You can also consider using water that comes through a filter that has been certified to remove heavy metals. For more, see [CR.org/watertest1221](https://www.consumerreports.org/watertest1221).



How to Store Your Spices

► CR food experts offer tips on keeping your spices fresh.

KEEP SPICES IN SMALL, AIRTIGHT CONTAINERS

Large containers or bulky bags invite air and moisture, which can affect the flavor or cause the spice to cake up, says CR nutritionist Amy Keating, RD.

STORE THEM IN COOL, DARK, DRY SPACES

Sunlight, heat, and moisture can diminish the flavor and aroma, says Sana Mujahid, PhD, manager of food safety research and testing at CR. So don't keep spices in a cabinet above the stove or near the dishwasher. And if you keep spices on your countertop? "Only do that if you use that dried spice often," she says.

DON'T REFRIGERATE OR FREEZE SPICES

Doing so won't extend their shelf life. In fact, chilling or freezing may make them spoil faster, Mujahid says.



DON'T SPRINKLE A SPICE DIRECTLY INTO A HOT DISH

"The steam could carry moisture into the container," Keating says. Transfer spice to a spoon or dish, then add it to the pot.

GIVE YOUR SPICES THE SNIFF TEST

Dried herbs and spices don't go bad in the sense that they become unsafe to eat. But the aroma and flavor fade

over time. In general, that means two to four years for whole spices, such as allspice, clove, and nutmeg, and two to three years for ground ones, like curry and ginger, according to the Department of Agriculture. But in some cases they can degrade faster. "If you can't smell the spice, regardless of how long you've had it, it's lacking in freshness," Keating says. "So it's probably time to throw it out."

Dry Your Own

► For our herb drying tests, a CR staffer tried an air fryer, a toaster oven, and a multi-cooker in her home kitchen. All are from CR's list of recommended products, and all have a dehydrate function. We used fresh basil, first pinching off the leaves from the stem, then rinsing and drying. In each case, we selected the dehydrate function on the device and, once warmed, placed a single layer of basil in it. Here's what you need to know about each.



AIR FRYER

PREHEAT 135° F
PLACE ON Crisper tray
DRY FOR 30 minutes
 This was the fastest in our tests, but the fryer has a limited basket capacity, so it's best for small quantities.

MODEL TESTED
 Gourmia GAF686, \$70



TOASTER OVEN

PREHEAT 125° F
PLACE ON Dehydration rack
DRY FOR 4 hours
 This was the slowest of the methods we tried. But you can do a lot at once, so it is ideal for drying large amounts.

MODEL TESTED
 Breville BOV900BSS, \$400



MULTI-COOKER

PREHEAT 125° F
PLACE ON Multi-cooker basket
DRY FOR 3 hours, 30 minutes
 The device had limited space. To increase capacity, consider buying a multilayer stainless steel dehydrator rack that fits in the device.

MODEL TESTED
 Instant Pot Duo Crisp, \$120

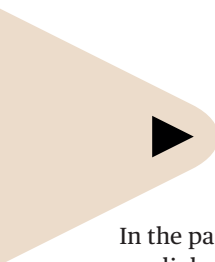
Big News

About

Hearing Aids

With so many options for devices that offer help, how can you decide which one is right for you? Here, expert advice on what's available now and what to expect when over-the-counter hearing aids debut—possibly as soon as 2022.

BY CATHERINE ROBERTS



HEARING AIDS ARE becoming cheaper, more accessible, and more technologically sophisticated. But with many new options on the market, the process of choosing a pair has also become more complicated.

In the past, consumers usually bought hearing aids from an audiologist or other medical professional, and they cost an average of \$2,363 per ear. Then, four years ago Congress passed a landmark law allowing hearing aids to be sold over-the-counter (OTC) to adults with mild to moderate hearing loss. The law was intended to make the devices more affordable and easier to buy. But because of delays at the Food and Drug Administration caused by the complexity of the task and the pandemic, there are still no official rules about the OTC devices. That means products meeting

the government's definition of an OTC hearing aid aren't actually available today.

The market for easy-to-buy hearing-improvement products has exploded anyway, resulting in a confusing array of options sold with claims that they can boost your hearing without the need to see a doctor or audiologist. These devices are often cheaper—some far cheaper—than conventional hearing aids. But without federal standards or professional guidance, it can be difficult to know which products will really help.

Broadly speaking, these devices break down into three categories. Personal sound amplification products (PSAPs), which you might see on store shelves, provide simple amplification. But the FDA forbids them from being marketed as hearing aids or as a treatment for hearing loss. Legally



► Guide to Hearing Helpers

speaking, they're not medical devices at all. (Apple AirPods Pro and Max, for example, can be configured to function similarly to PSAPs.) There's also a single device made by Bose that's in a separate FDA-approved category for self-fitting hearing aids. (More on that in "Guide to Hearing Helpers," at right.)

A third type of product is one many experts refer to as direct-to-consumer (DTC) hearing aids. Sold by upstart companies like Eargo and Lively as well as older ones like Lloyd, DTC devices don't require a visit to an audiologist or hearing aid dispenser, and consumers can get them online or by mail order. This is possible in part because the FDA has long allowed consumers to waive a medical evaluation before buying a hearing aid. And federal laws don't prohibit the online or mail-order sale of hearing aids. Some state laws do, but legal disputes have left their validity and enforceability in question. In recent years the number of DTC aids on the market has ballooned.





The FDA considers most hearing aids to be low-risk devices, so it doesn't require companies to demonstrate that they're safe and effective before selling them. DTC and traditional hearing aids are often essentially the same, sometimes even produced by the same manufacturer. The main difference is in how you buy them. While buying in person allows providers to spot-test products and offer some quality control, they may carry only a limited selection of brands and models. Many consumers are understandably tempted to try the DTC route instead because those aids often cost less and are easier to get.

"The issue right now, from a consumer point of view, is that it's so confusing," says Frank Lin, MD, PhD, director of the Cochlear Center for Hearing and Public Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "You don't know which ones are good. You don't know which ones are bad."

Should you try DTC hearing aids?

Experts we asked had a range of answers. What's clear is that it's better to get hearing help sooner rather than later. "The risks of nontreatment are greater than the risk of less-than-perfect treatment," says Kim Cavitt, AuD, a hearing healthcare consultant. Untreated hearing loss is linked to an increased risk of depression, isolation, and even dementia.

In the past decade experts have come to realize that requiring people to see a doctor or an audiologist may provide some quality control but also adds cost and complication, and limits consumers' options. Those obstacles—along with the persistent stigma of wearing hearing aids—may explain why so many people who need the devices don't get them. Cavitt's advice is that while there are no guarantees

	Brands/ Est. Prices	Where to Buy
Traditional hearing aids 	Kirkland Signature, Oticon, Phonak, ReSound, Starkey, etc. \$1,400 to \$6,000/pair	Audiologist, ENT, hearing-aid dispensers such as Costco or licensed hearing professional
Personal sound amplification products (PSAPs) 	Bell & Howell, Britzgo, Etymotic, Soundtastic, Soundworld, etc. \$30 to \$700/pair	Online, store shelves
Direct-to-consumer (DTC) hearing aids 	Audien Hearing, Eargo, Hearing Help Express, Lexie, Lively, Lloyd, MDHearing Aid, etc. \$150 to \$3,000/pair	Online, via mail, store shelves in certain states
Self-fitting hearing aids 	Bose \$850/pair	Online (via Bose)

► The distinctions between types can be hard to tease out, but the devices are regulated differently. Traditional and direct-to-consumer aids must be sold with basic information required by the Food and Drug Administration. Traditional

hearing aids are sold only by an in-person provider. Some personal sound amplification products look like hearing aids but can't be marketed as such. Self-fitting hearing aids are in a new category of their own. Here's how to make sense of it all.

What They Are		Who They Are For
Regulated by the Food and Drug Administration since 1977, these are wearable devices meant to compensate for hearing loss. They come in many styles, such as behind the ear and in the ear canal. You buy them through an audiologist or other licensed hearing aid dispenser, who	will evaluate you and adjust the hearing aids to fit your needs. Most devices are made by just a handful of companies that dominate the market, which can limit a consumer's choices. Go to CR.org/hearingaids1221 for ratings.	People with mild, moderate, or severe hearing loss.
These seem similar to hearing aids. But officially, they're intended to amplify sound only for people without hearing loss in situations where amplification might be helpful, such as listening to lectures from far away or watching TV on low volume.	Some PSAPs operate similarly to hearing aids, and published research suggests that certain models can be helpful to some people with mild to moderate hearing loss. See our 2017 evaluation of PSAP models at CR.org/psaps1221 .	May be an option for some people with mild to moderate hearing loss, though the FDA doesn't permit PSAP sellers to market to this group.
This is a term used to describe hearing aids sold directly to consumers, generally online and by mail order. Some companies offer customization and significant online support from hearing healthcare professionals. Other sellers offer just one or two hearing aid products that can't be	customized. The Federal Trade Commission advises consumers to avoid DTC hearing aids that aren't sold by a licensed dispenser. It also cautions against products with only two settings—loud and louder—because they might actually harm your hearing.	People with mild to moderate hearing loss.
There's only one product in this category: the Bose SoundControl Hearing Aids. "Self-fitting" refers not to how the hearing aids physically fit into your ears but to how the device's output is adjusted. People with this device download Bose's corresponding	app and use it to adjust the settings based on how it sounds. This is in place of the adjustments an audiologist would make with traditional hearing aids. Users can continue to make adjustments in real time.	People with mild to moderate hearing loss.



FDA-approved over-the-counter hearing aids

These devices aren't on the market yet but will be available without requiring a visit to an audiologist or other healthcare provider. Frank Lin, MD, PhD, of Johns Hopkins, told CR he expects that consumer electronics companies like Samsung and Apple may enter the market with these devices, which may at first look like some of the DTC options already available—but may be subject to additional rules. Once the OTC rules are finalized, the new competition could drive down prices and open up innovation in hearing aid technology, which will likely be a plus for consumers.

about DTC hearing aids, any hearing help is better than none at all.

Some experts told us they advise consumers to stick with purchasing hearing aids through a licensed provider, at least until FDA-approved OTC aids are available. The Federal Trade Commission also advises consumers to avoid DTC hearing aids, because people might not get the professional guidance that could help steer them to the right aid for their particular needs. It's likely that the final FDA rules for OTC devices won't be released until sometime in 2022, and then there will be an additional lag while manufacturers make sure their products are in compliance.

With all that in mind, if you do opt to go the DTC route, here are tips to help you weigh your many options.

Get your hearing tested.

Several of the experts we spoke with recommend getting a hearing test before embarking on a search for DTC hearing aids. Start with your primary care doctor, because some insurance plans, including Medicare, will cover a test only if you have a referral. Some DTC companies let you upload an audiogram from an audiologist, or they offer remote hearing assessments that can help you determine if their product might work for you. Without a hearing test, many people underestimate the amount of hearing loss they have, says Thomas Powers, PhD, a consultant to the hearing aid industry. "You may not get something that's appropriate for you if you don't know exactly what you need," he says.

Still, having to get a hearing test can be a significant barrier for some, says Carrie Nieman, MD, an assistant professor in the department of otolaryngology, head and neck surgery at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. If you don't have ear pain or other concerns and the trouble you're having with hearing is relatively mild, she says that getting a test may not be an absolute necessity.

You may also want to be checked for possible medical problems. The FDA requires hearing aids to be sold with a notice to consumers that a medical evaluation is advisable to rule out reversible or medically serious causes of hearing loss. (The agency requires such an evaluation for people younger than 18, though adults can waive it.) If you're not sure whether you should seek a doctor's help, consider starting with the free online Consumer Ear Disease Risk Assessment, at sites.northwestern.edu/cedra, developed by Northwestern University. It's still in the

► **"It's so confusing. You don't know which ones are good. You don't know which ones are bad."**

testing phase but may help flag ear problems that require a doctor's visit.

Check out the return policy before buying.

Make sure you can return whatever you buy. Several companies offer a full refund for 30 or 60 days after you receive the hearing aids, and some, such as MDHearing and Lexie, recommend you try them out for a minimum of 21 days. That's because it can take some time to adjust to a new pair. Whatever company you choose, make sure you'll be able to try the hearing aids for at least a few weeks.

Don't be fooled by 'FDA registered.'

"FDA registered" and "FDA cleared" don't mean much. Companies sometimes use tricky language to imply that their devices have been carefully reviewed in some way by the agency, when that's generally not the case.

Consider customer service.

You may prefer to buy from a company that offers more support, such as consultations with an audiologist over the phone or online. Eargo and Lively, for example, offer consults with licensed hearing professionals who can also make remote adjustments to your hearing aids. But keep in mind that the more services a company offers, the more expensive the product may be. This is a reason the cost of traditional hearing aids is high; the evaluation, customization, and service are a significant part of the price.

Pay close attention to the features.

Rechargeable batteries rather than tiny, hard-to-handle replacement batteries can be a plus for many people. Another helpful feature is a telecoil or T-coil, which allows you to use your hearing aids to tap directly into assistive listening systems at large events, places of worship, theaters, and elsewhere. And Bluetooth can be useful for people who are regular smartphone users. It can allow you to use your hearing aid to talk on the phone or stream music, Nieman says.

Keep looking.

If you buy a DTC hearing aid and it doesn't work for you, don't give up, urges Barbara Kelley, executive director of the Hearing Loss Association of America. "It might just not be a good device," she says. Return it and try again—or consider consulting an audiologist. There's almost surely something out there that can help.

ROAD REPORT



NEWS & EXPERT
ADVICE TO
KEEP YOU
AHEAD OF
THE CURVE™



TIP FROM OUR TEST TRACK

Keep Safety Sensors Clean in Winter

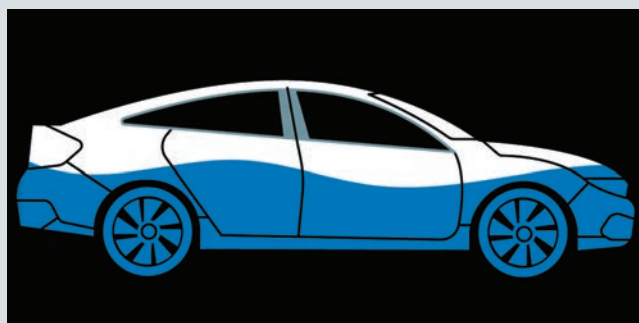
The active safety sensors and cameras on your car need to be free of road grime, ice, and snow to do their job. The specific locations for your car are listed in the owner's manual, but they're most often found in these areas:

- ▶ The grille
- ▶ The top of the windshield
- ▶ Front and rear bumpers
- ▶ Rear body quarter panels
- ▶ Outside mirrors

Be sure these areas are clear before driving. Going through a car wash once a week will help to keep the car's sensors and cameras clean.

ASK OUR EXPERTS

How can I avoid buying a flood-damaged car?



Flood-damaged cars are often repaired and **resold to unsuspecting buyers**. Cars damaged by Hurricane Ida could be reaching the market right about now. Flood waters can ruin lubricants and mechanical systems, and it **can take months to detect** the corrosion of vital electronics. Carfax offers a free flood damage check (carfax.com/flood) and the National Insurance Crime Bureau offers a similar online tool (nicb.org/vincheck). But the best protection is a thorough professional inspection.

THE VITAL STATISTIC

76%

Percentage of Americans who drive 2015 or newer cars that have touch-screen controls. "Some screens are simple to use, but many in our tests are overly complicated and can be distracting to drivers," says Jake Fisher, CR's senior director of auto testing. "Try out any car's controls before you buy."

Source: August 2021 CR nationally representative survey of 2,236 U.S. adults.

RECALL



Toyota

Toyota is recalling more than 158,000 model year 2018 through 2021 Tundra pickup trucks. Faulty wiring can illuminate low- and high-beam headlights at the same time, which can lead to bulb failure or a fire in the headlight assembly. Only models with halogen bulbs are affected.

WHAT TO DO: Dealerships will replace the faulty wiring at no charge. For more information about the recall, contact Toyota at 800-331-4331.

FIRST DRIVE

Tesla Model S



When it debuted in 2012, the Model S was the first EV to combine performance, robust range, and a vast network of fast chargers. The first major update of this roomy, quick, and luxurious EV gives it more power, a freshened interior, and a range of over 400 miles.

CR'S TAKE: The new steering yoke is awkward, and the buttons for

turn signals, high beams, and horn aren't natural to use and require taking your eyes off the road. The Model S remains agile and enjoyable to drive, but we continue to be concerned about its many unique distractions.

BASE PRICE RANGE \$89,990-\$129,990
DESTINATION CHARGE \$1,200
PRICE AS DRIVEN \$92,690

Get the Best New Tires for Less

With these expert tips you'll
save big and get great service, too.

BY JEFF S. BARTLETT



**BUYING
REPLACEMENT
TIRES** can be
an expensive
and confusing
experience. You
can easily spend

\$800 or more by the time you add up
the cost of four tires plus additional
charges for mounting and balancing.
And the numerous brands, various
categories, and wide range of prices
can lead some consumers to rely on
a salesperson's recommendation,
which isn't always the best way to

get a great tire for a great price. But
following these tips from CR's tire
experts will ensure that you do.

Consider Buying a Full Set

Our most recent member survey on
tire-buying experiences found that
about 85 percent bought a full set for
their last purchase rather than just
buying one or two. Replacing all of the
tires at the same time guarantees an
even grip on all four corners of the car—
and may even entitle you to a rebate.

"It's common for tire makers and even
retailers to offer discounts for buying

four tires," says Ryan Pszczolkowski,
CR's project leader for tire testing.
Rebates are often about \$100 per set but
can be higher. To find out who's offering
rebates, go to tire-maker and retailer
websites. Rebates and other specials
are usually prominently displayed and
sometimes listed in their own section.

Look for Perks

Many tire retailers offer extras to help
them stand out from the competition.
In our most recent survey, Les Schwab
Tire Centers and Costco were two
that were singled out for their perks.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



TIRE-BUYING CHECKLIST

1 START LOOKING BEFORE YOU NEED THEM

Place a quarter upside down in a tread groove. If the top of George Washington's head is just visible, the tread has about a 4/32-inch depth, and it's time to start shopping.

2 REVIEW CR'S TIRE RATINGS

Find models in the correct category for your car, focusing on the ones that score well in the areas that matter most to you, such as wet braking or snow traction.

3 LOOK FOR DEALS

Check tire-maker and retailer websites for rebates and sales. Call around to find out if local tire shops include perks, like periodic tire rotations.

4 GO FOR QUALITY

Compare out-the-door prices (including mounting and balancing) when making your decision. And remember that with tires, value is a function of both performance and cost per mile. Better tires often cost more and last longer.

The most common ones that CR members encountered were free tire balancing, lifetime tire rotation, and tire mounting. Tire rotation may be the best of these because it needs to be done every 5,000 to 7,500 miles and costs about \$50 each time.

Even when a retailer offers perks, always ask for a better price. Among CR members who tried haggling on tires, 70 percent said they got a better deal, reporting a median savings of \$96 per set of four.

Les Schwab, Tirerack.com, Discount Tire, Costco, and America's

Tire topped our ratings for overall satisfaction. As a broad category, independent retailers were rated on a par with those leading chains. Car dealerships were well rated but weren't in the top ratings tier.

Plan Your Purchase


The key to tire buying is to start looking at least a month out when the tread depth of your current tires is still at least 4/32 inch. (You might need to have a second tire choice in mind because the pandemic continues to disrupt tire availability.) That will give you time

to find the right ones for your needs and the flexibility to wait for a sale or rebate.

Consult CR's Tire Ratings

With tires, value is best assessed by considering price, the Overall Score in CR's ratings, and tread life. Those factors will often lead to high-performing tires with a generous projected tread life that also come at a higher price than many other models. But when you factor in the actual cost per mile, the more expensive choice could be the best value.

Ratings ➤ **Top Treads** Our detailed ratings for all-season, all-terrain, and winter/snow tires will help you find the best set at the best price for your car, SUV, or truck.

Brand + Model		Overall Score	Price	Three-Season Driving				Winter Driving		Comfort		Other	
				Dry braking	Wet braking	Handling	Hydroplaning resistance	Snow traction	Ice braking	Ride	Noise	Rolling resistance	Tested tread life (miles)
ALL-SEASON TIRES													
✓	Michelin Defender T+H	67	\$179	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	85,000
✓	General Altimax RT43	66	\$129	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬇	70,000
	Continental TrueContact Tour	63	\$139	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	70,000
	Hankook Kinergy PT	63	\$123	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	85,000
	BFGoodrich Advantage Control All Season	62	\$126	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	55,000
	Firestone All Season	61	\$104	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	65,000
	Toyo Extensa A/S II	58	\$119	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	65,000
	Firestone WeatherGrip TM	58	\$134	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	55,000
PERFORMANCE ALL-SEASON TIRES													
✓	Michelin CrossClimate2 TM	74	\$179	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	85,000
✓	Continental PureContact LS	67	\$142	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	75,000
✓	Hankook Kinergy 4s2 TM	67	\$129	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	55,000
✓	General Altimax 365 AW TM	66	\$115	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	60,000
✓	Vredestein Quatrac Pro TM	66	\$138	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	65,000
	Nokian One	65	\$123	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	65,000
	Goodyear Assurance WeatherReady TM	65	\$170	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	70,000
	Nexen N5000 Platinum	63	\$116	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	55,000
	Pirelli Cinturato P7 All Season Plus II	63	\$130	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	60,000
	Yokohama Avid Ascend LX	62	\$144	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	70,000
	Yokohama Avid Ascend GT	60	\$144	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	65,000
	Uniroyal Tiger Paw Touring A/S	59	\$117	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	55,000
	Nokian WRG4 TM	57	\$139	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	50,000
	Firestone Firehawk AS	57	\$113	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	55,000
ULTRA-HIGH-PERFORMANCE ALL-SEASON TIRES													
✓	Goodyear Eagle Exhilarate	68	\$159	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬇	45,000
✓	Michelin Pilot Sport A/S 3+	66	\$159	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	55,000
✓	General G-MAX AS-05	66	\$112	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	65,000
	BFGoodrich g-Force COMP-2 A/S	66	\$126	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	65,000
	Pirelli P Zero All Season Plus	64	\$143	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	55,000
	Continental ExtremeContact DWS06	64	\$148	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	50,000
	Kumho Ecsta PA51	62	\$134	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	50,000

Brand + Model		Overall Score	Price	Three-Season Driving				Winter Driving		Comfort		Other	
				Dry braking	Wet braking	Handling	Hydroplaning resistance	Snow traction	Ice braking	Ride	Noise	Rolling resistance	Tested tread life (miles)
ALL-SEASON SUV TIRES													
✓	Michelin CrossClimate SUV [†]	74	\$205	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	⬆	⬆	⬆	40,000
✓	Vredestein HiTrac	69	\$169	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	55,000
✓	Goodyear Assurance ComfortDrive	67	\$198	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	NA	⬇	⬆	⬇	80,000
✓	Kumho Crugen HP71	66	\$139	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	NA	⬆	⬆	⬆	55,000
	Pirelli Scorpion Verde All Season Plus II	65	\$169	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	⬆	⬆	⬆	45,000
	Falken Ziex CT60 A/S	65	\$159	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	60,000
	Sumitomo HTR Enhance CX2	65	\$146	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	75,000
	Continental CrossContact LX25	64	\$169	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬆	⬆	⬆	85,000
	Michelin Defender LTX M/S [H]	64	\$190	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬇	⬆	90,000
	Sentury Crossover	63	\$80	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	50,000
	Nokian WR G4 SUV [†]	63	\$185	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬆	⬆	⬆	55,000
	Nokian eNTYRE C/S	62	\$159	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	60,000
	Hankook Dynapro HP2	61	\$159	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	85,000
ALL-SEASON TRUCK TIRES													
✓	Continental TerrainContact H/T	69	\$166	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬇	⬆	NA	⬆	⬆	⬆	95,000
	General Grabber HTS60	62	\$166	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	75,000
	Michelin Defender LTX M/S [T]	62	\$229	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	80,000
	Laufenn X Fit HT	57	\$157	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	55,000
	Kumho Crugen HT51	56	\$139	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	55,000
	Bridgestone Dueler Alenza H/L Plus	55	\$189	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	65,000
	Falken Wildpeak H/T HT02	54	\$169	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	NA	⬇	⬆	⬇	45,000
	Nokian Rotiiva HT	54	\$177	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	60,000
	Firestone Destination LE3	54	\$150	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬆	⬆	⬆	60,000
	Hankook Dynapro HT	54	\$155	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	60,000
ALL-TERRAIN TRUCK TIRES													
✓	Continental TerrainContact A/T	62	\$166	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	55,000
✓	Michelin LTX A/T2	61	\$222	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬇	⬆	100,000
✓	Bridgestone Dueler A/T Revo 3	60	\$233	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	55,000
✓	Vredestein Pinza AT	60	\$169	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	NA	⬆	⬆	⬆	75,000
	Cooper Discoverer AT3 4S	58	\$171	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	60,000
	General Grabber APT	58	\$154	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬇	⬇	60,000

[†] All-weather tires have enhanced winter traction.

Brand + Model		Overall Score	Price	Three-Season Driving				Winter Driving		Comfort		Other	
				Dry braking	Wet braking	Handling	Hydroplaning resistance	Snow traction	Ice braking	Ride	Noise	Rolling resistance	Tested tread life (miles)
ALL-TERRAIN TRUCK TIRES <i>Continued</i>													
GT Radial Adventuro AT3		58	\$144	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	40,000
Mickey Thompson Deegan 38		57	\$179	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	NA	⬆	⬆	⬆	65,000
Firestone Destination A/T2		57	\$168	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	60,000
Toyo Open Country A/T III		57	\$195	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬇	⬇	60,000
Falken Wildpeak A/T3W		57	\$166	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	NA	⬇	⬇	⬇	50,000
WINTER/SNOW TIRES													
✔	Bridgestone Blizzak WS90	73	\$131	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	NA
✔	Michelin X-Ice Snow	73	\$177	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA
✔	Continental VikingContact 7	70	\$139	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA
✔	Hankook Winter i*cept iz2	69	\$113	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	NA
✔	Goodyear WinterCommand Ultra	69	\$140	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	NA
✔	General Altimax Arctic 12	68	\$122	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬇	NA
	Nokian Nordman 7	64	\$130	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	NA
	Nokian Hakkapeliitta R3	64	\$177	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	NA
	Toyo Observe GSi-6 HP	64	\$113	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬇	NA
	Yokohama iceGuard iG53	63	\$137	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	NA
	Nexen Winguard ice Plus	62	\$108	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬇	⬇	NA
	Falken Winterpeak F-ice 1	62	\$112	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	NA
	Pirelli Winter Sottozero 3	60	\$130	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	NA
WINTER/SNOW TRUCK TIRES													
✔	Michelin Latitude X-Ice XI2	72	\$189	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	NA	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA
✔	Nexen Winguard winspike WS62	72	\$127	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	NA	⬆	⬇	⬆	NA
✔	Nokian Hakkapeliitta R3 SUV	71	\$169	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	NA	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA
✔	General Grabber Arctic	70	\$129	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬆	⬆	⬆	NA
✔	Bridgestone Blizzak DM-V2	69	\$169	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	NA	⬆	⬇	⬆	NA
	Hankook i*Pike RW11	67	\$166	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬆	⬇	⬆	NA
	Goodyear WinterCommand	66	\$155	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	NA	⬇	⬇	⬇	NA
	Firestone Winterforce 2 UV	65	\$139	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA	⬇	⬆	⬆	NA
>	Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/tires . Find the right tires for your car, SUV, or truck.												

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score is based on about a dozen tests, with braking, handling, and hydroplaning resistance more heavily weighted for many tires. Braking tests on ice are from 10 mph; on dry and wet pavement, from 60 to

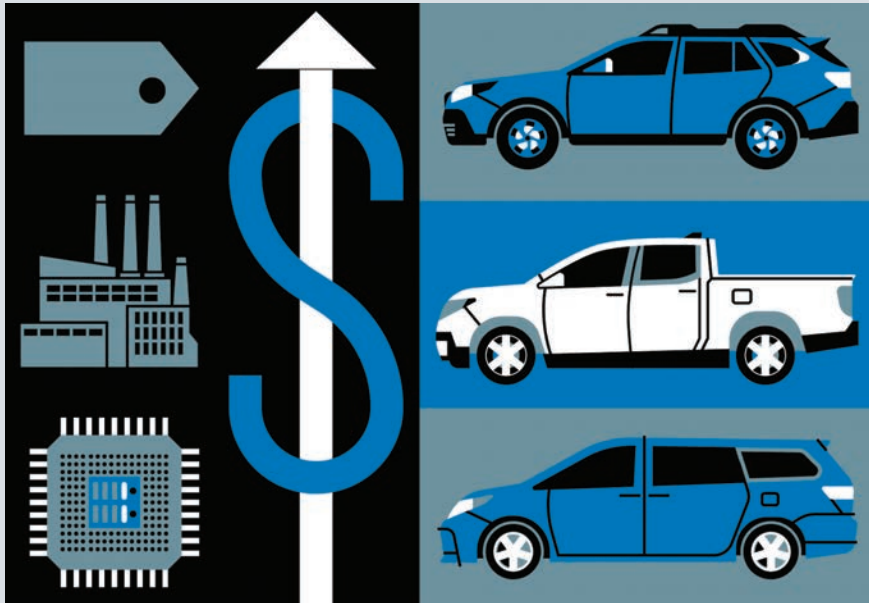
0 mph. Handling combines how well a tire performed in the wet-handling test, steering feel, and an emergency handling maneuver. Hydroplaning denotes a tire's ability to resist skimming along the surface of standing

water. Snow traction tests denote how far a vehicle has to travel to accelerate from 5 to 20 mph on moderately packed snow. Ride and Noise are evaluated subjectively on rough and smooth roads. Rolling resistance, as measured

by a dynamometer, is a factor in fuel economy. Tread life is projected from a 16,000-mile vehicle test run on public roads in Texas for many tires. Price is approximate retail.



Smart SUV Alternatives



MOST CONSUMERS LOOKING for a new car want to buy an SUV. But getting one at a good price these days can be a challenge. Pandemic-related microchip shortages, temporary factory closures, and labor problems have led to a scarcity of new models and driven up prices significantly. For example, an analysis by Consumer Reports found that earlier this year people were paying upward of 20 percent over sticker price for a 2022 Kia Telluride three-row SUV, and many other SUV models are also being sold for more than the MSRP. Creative shoppers may find deals by considering front-wheel-drive models or broadening their options to include alternatives that can provide most of the advantages of an SUV but are more widely available and priced within reach. The three CR-recommended models below, chosen by our experts, deliver much of what consumers look for in an SUV—and even outshine them in certain ways.

WAGON

SUBARU OUTBACK

The Outback wagon stacks up quite well against many small and midsize SUVs. Standard all-wheel drive, elevated ground clearance, and integrated roof-rack bars give it crossover credentials. It's lower than a comparable SUV, making it easier to use the roof rack, and a bicycle easily fits inside with the rear seat folded. Ride quality is impressive. The base engine gets good fuel economy, but the optional 260-hp turbocharged four-cylinder engine is quiet and punchy, delivering 24 mpg overall.



BASE PRICE RANGE \$26,945–\$39,945
DESTINATION CHARGE \$1,125
OVERALL SCORE **86**

PICKUP TRUCK

HONDA RIDGELINE

Weekend warriors and other active types who don't need to transport more than five people may find that the Ridgeline meets their needs. Under that adventure-ready body is a platform shared with the three-row Pilot, complete with standard AWD and a smooth-riding independent suspension. The Ridgeline has a lined bed that can be hosed out, which beats throwing dirty gear in the cargo section of an SUV. The rear gate is dual-action; it can either swing open or drop down. There's also a hidden cargo box to store valuables.



BASE PRICE RANGE \$36,890–\$44,320
DESTINATION CHARGE \$1,225
OVERALL SCORE **80**

MINIVAN

TOYOTA SIENNA

If you want an SUV to accommodate a growing family, consider a minivan, which can also provide abundant space and great versatility in storage and seating configurations. For example, the Sienna's third-row seat folds into the floor and the second row slides and folds forward. This minivan also stands out for its optional AWD, comfortable ride, and key standard safety features. And now the Sienna comes strictly as a hybrid, delivering a stunning 36 mpg overall in our testing. No three-row SUV can match that combination.



BASE PRICE RANGE \$34,560–\$50,760
DESTINATION CHARGE \$1,215
OVERALL SCORE **77**



ROAD TEST

EXCLUSIVE RATINGS & REVIEWS
BASED ON TESTING AT CR'S
327-ACRE AUTO TEST CENTER



MIDSIZE 3-ROW SUVs

Jeep Grand Cherokee L

Updated,
But Not Enough

63

OVERALL
SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 75

HIGHS Transmission, interior space, roomy third row, towing capacity

LOWS Acceleration, braking, noisy V6 engine, controls

POWERTRAIN 290-hp, 3.6-liter V6 engine; 8-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive

FUEL 19 mpg on regular

PRICE
\$36,995-\$61,955 base price range
\$55,265 as tested

THE FIRST GRAND Cherokee redesign in a decade kicks off with a new three-row version, dubbed the “L.” We found it roomy, comfortable, and well appointed. But there are more compelling choices, such as the Kia Telluride and Toyota Highlander, with considerably higher road-test scores.

The Jeep’s base 290-hp V6 is willing enough during regular driving, aided by the smooth-shifting eight-speed automatic, but the engine feels strained and sounds thrashy at higher revs. The Jeep is one of the slowest SUVs in the class, needing 8.8 seconds to run from 0 to 60 mph—top rivals are in the low 7s. Its 19 mpg overall is also far from stellar, but towing capacity is strong, at 6,200 pounds with the V6. The tires don’t grip the road with as much tenacity as we’d like, resulting in a modest speed through our avoidance maneuver (though

it still ultimately proved to be secure at its limits) and contributing to unusually long stopping distances during our brake testing.

Cabin space is a high point. We liked the roomy driving position, which is well suited to long-haul trips thanks to comfortable seats and well-placed armrests. The second and third rows have more space than many rivals, but the flat seats could use more contouring to hold passengers in place and improve comfort.

The Jeep’s cabin is attractive, with glossy-black trim, wood, and stitching, but some panels were misaligned. We also found some of the controls cluttered and confusing, including the row of buttons on top of the center screen and the low, oddly angled climate controls.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, LDW, and LKA come standard.



SMALL LUXURY SUVs

Genesis GV70

A Dreamy Drive With
Bad Infotainment

64

OVERALL
SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 82

HIGHS Ride, handling, transmission, seat comfort, fit and finish

LOWS Controls, rear visibility

POWERTRAIN 300-hp, 2.5-liter turbocharged 4-cylinder engine; 8-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive

FUEL 24 mpg on premium

PRICE
\$41,000-\$52,750 base price range
\$51,095 as tested

THE GV70, THE latest model from Hyundai’s fledgling upscale brand, is a delight to drive because it delivers a pampering blend of sport and luxury. If it weren’t for the nightmarish infotainment controls, many on our staff who test-drove this new entry would be thrilled to own one, especially in our model’s gorgeous Cardiff Green paint.

The GV70’s standard turbo four-cylinder gives strong acceleration accompanied by an invigorating exhaust note when pushed, and the eight-speed transmission shifts smoothly. On twisty roads the GV70 handles more like a sports sedan than an SUV. It feels taut, agile, and tied to the pavement, aided by precise steering. Yet the suspension soaks up bumps nicely.

The interior has an elegance seldom seen in this class, with lots of padded surfaces, high-quality buttons, and textured

knobs and stalks. The front seats are cushy yet supportive, and they have a wide array of adjustments.

Despite swoopy styling that can often steal cabin space, the vehicle’s rear-seat room is decent, although the sloping roofline and thick pillars cause big rear blind spots, a potential problem for drivers looking over their shoulder.

The infotainment system, with its finicky rotary controller dial, could ice the whole deal. The dial makes it extra aggravating to move through the multiple options and menus. As a remedy, the dashboard display can be used as a touch screen, but it’s a long reach for the driver. Plus, the rotary gear-selector knob is placed directly behind the dial, making it too easy to grab the wrong controller.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, LDW, and LKA come standard.

PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

Ratings ➤ **A Tale of Two SUVs** The Genesis GV70's driving experience makes it a worthy rival to European models. The Jeep Grand Cherokee L lags behind leading 3-row SUVs.

Make + Model	Overall Score	Survey Results	Road-Test Results													Active Safety Features			
		Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Road-test score	Overall mpg	Seat comfort, front/rear	Usability	Noise	Ride	Fit + finish	Routine handling	Avoidance-maneuver speed, mph	Acceleration, 0-60 mph, sec.	Dry braking, 60-0 mph, ft.	Cargo volume, cu. ft.	FCW	AEB, pedestrian	AEB, highway	BSW

3-ROW SUVs \$35,000-\$45,000

✓ Kia Telluride 3.8L	97	⬆	⬆	97	21	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.2	127	47.5	S	S	S	S
✓ Hyundai Palisade 3.8L	86	⬆	⬆	88	21	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.1	132	47.5	S	S	S	S
✓ Toyota Highlander 3.5L	84	⬆	⬆	86	22	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.3	132	41.0	S	S	S	0
✓ Mazda CX-9 2.5T	80	⬆	⬆	79	22	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.9	139	34.0	S	S	S	S
✓ Kia Sorento 2.5T	77	⬆	⬆	83	25	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	6.5	133	39.5	S	S	S	0
✓ Honda Pilot 3.5L	73	⬆	⬆	80	20	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.5	136	48.0	S	S	S	S
Chevrolet Traverse 3.6L	71	⬆	⬆	95	20	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.3	130	54.5	S	S	0	0
Nissan Pathfinder 3.5L	65	⬆	⬆	85	21	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.6	138	44.5	S	S	S	S
Jeep Grand Cherokee L 3.6L	63	⬆	⬆	75	19	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	8.8	141	45.0	S	S	S	S
Subaru Ascent 2.4T	60	⬆	⬆	93	22	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	8.0	129	40.5	S	S	S	0
Volkswagen Atlas 3.6L	57	⬆	⬆	84	20	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	8.7	135	50.5	S	S	S	S
Dodge Durango 3.6L	49	⬆	⬆	83	18	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	8.3	134	44.0	0	—	0	0
Ford Explorer 2.3T	42	⬆	⬆	78	21	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.4	136	44.5	S	S	S	S

2-ROW SUVs \$45,000-\$55,000

✓ Audi Q5 2.0T	78	⬆	⬆	83	24	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	6.8	130	27.0	S	S	0	S
✓ Mercedes-Benz GLC300 2.0T	75	⬆	⬆	79	22	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	6.8	132	28.0	S	S	S	S
BMW X3 2.0T	69	⬆	⬆	92	24	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.7	128	32.0	S	S	0	S
Genesis GV70 2.5T	64	⬆	⬆	82	24	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.5	135	27.5	S	S	S	S
Infiniti QX50 2.0T	61	⬆	⬆	77	22	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.2	129	30.5	S	S	S	S
Volvo XC60 2.0T	60	⬆	⬆	79	23	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	8.0	124	34.0	S	S	S	S
Lincoln Corsair 2.0T	53	⬆	⬆	82	23	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.2	128	27.5	S	S	S	S
Jaguar F-Pace 3.0T	52	⬆	⬆	72	20	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	6.0	129	28.5	S	S	S	S
Cadillac XT4 2.0T	52	⬆	⬆	78	23	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.6	128	26.5	S	S	0	0
Land Rover Range Rover Velar 2.0T	49	⬆	⬆	76	21	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	8.4	130	29.0	S	S	S	S
Alfa Romeo Stelvio 2.0T	45	⬆	⬆	74	24	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	7.0	132	26.5	S	S	S	0

➤ Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at [CR.org/cars](https://www.car.com/cars). When you're ready to buy, configure the vehicle and find the best price in your area by clicking the green "View Pricing Information" button on the model's dedicated page.

HOW WE TEST: Recommended models did well in our **Overall Score**, which factors in **road-test results**, **predicted reliability**, **owner satisfaction**, and

advanced safety, which includes crash-test results and the availability of crash-prevention features, such as forward collision warning, automatic

emergency braking, pedestrian detection, and blind spot warning. — means no such safety system is offered; 0 means that it's optional on at least some trim levels;

S means that the feature is standard on all trims. We deduct points if a model's gear selector lacks fail-safes to prevent the vehicle from rolling away.

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Holiday Gifts Gone Wrong

'Tis the season for some pretty silly screwups



\$26.99

reg \$28.99

Sale Online

Rite Lite 45ct Deluxe
Hanukkah Candles 5....

Sold & shipped by Christmas ...



It's a Good Deal Except for One Little Thing ...

These candles will arrive too late because Hanukkah starts on Nov. 28 this year.

Submitted by Rita Sandstrom, Minnetonka, MN

What's an Extra \$9.99, Anyway?

Remember the good old days when "Gifts Under \$50" actually meant something?

Submitted by Stephanie Norris, as seen in Orlando, FL



The Grinch Was Here

Ready for some sticker shock? This toy car clearance sale saves you exactly zero.

Submitted by Christopher Holmes, Vancouver, WA



Maybe We'll Pass on This Stocking Stuffer

We don't need any extra stress, thanks!

Submitted by Blythe and Reece Miller, via email



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