

DIY BASEMENT INSPECTION CHECKLIST



1. INTERIOR INSPECTION – EXAMINE ALL FOUR WALLS FOR THE FOLLOWING INDICATORS OF WATER:

Musty odor or visible mold and mildew

If your basement or crawlspace has a musty odor, this is a sign of a moisture problem. The smell is usually caused by the growth of mold and mildew, which thrive in damp, moist environments. If someone in your house starts having allergies, difficulty breathing, or low threshold headaches, these symptoms could be triggered by mold and mildew.

Damp or wet walls

Water can make its way into the basement either through cracks in the walls, or by surrounding oversaturated soil seeping water through the wall itself. If the basement is finished, look for discolorations on the drywall.

Mineral deposits on walls

Efflorescence is a chalky white substance which may look powdery, or over a period of time it may develop a budding crystallized appearance. In either case, it is an indication of a water issue that must be addressed.

Rust on fuse boxes or appliances

Rust on metal surfaces in the basement is an indication of moisture, which is what causes rust to form.

Signs of insects or rodents

Moisture attracts insects such as roaches, centipedes, earwigs, carpenter ants, and termites, as well as rodents like mice. The water problem must be corrected before attempting to remove the pests, or they will likely return.

Peeling or bubbling paint

When paint is exposed to water or extreme moisture, it may bubble or begin to peel right off the walls and floor. Painting over the affected area, even with “waterproof” paint, only masks the issue and allows the underlying problem more time to become worse.

Rotting wood

If you have wood furniture, wooden beams, or anything else in the basement that is made of wood and beginning to rot, this is a sign of an extreme moisture or water problem. If you have wood beams that are in an advanced state of decay, you should check if repair is needed to keep the home structurally sound.

Wall issues such as cracks or bowing

Very large cracks or bowing of the foundation can be major structural problems that require attention, as well as the water problem that caused them.

Large cracks in the floor, or loose tiles or stains on the carpet

Very large cracks in the floor are signs of a slab that is heaving due to water pressure. If the basement is finished, loose or lifting tiles and damp or stained carpets are signs of moisture and water intrusion.

Signs of a previous attempt to fix or hide a water problem

These include obviously sealed cracks, layers of tar or hydraulic cement, caulking around windows, or cemented-up holes in the floor which may have once contained a sump pump. If you have any of these in your basement, water intrusion may have been an issue for some time.

2. EXTERIOR INSPECTION – CHECK THE FOUNDATION WALLS AND SURROUNDING AREAS:

Visible foundation cracks

Cracks should be monitored closely and may be a source of water seepage.

Poor drainage

Improperly graded soil may slope towards the home instead of away, making a water intrusion problem worse. Another issue might be poorly placed storm drains or drywells that overflow.

Severe cracking of poured concrete slabs such as driveway, porch, or stoop - or hollow space under these areas

Over time, the earth beneath poured slabs can settle, leaving a hollow space for water to pool against the foundation.