

Subsidence – spot the signs



With just a few tips and tricks, you can throw that sinking feeling out of the door

Understanding early signs is key to prevent and deal with subsidence issues. When it comes to subsidence, making small changes really can make a big difference – and the sooner the better.

What's subsidence?

Subsidence is the downward movement of the ground beneath a building. Clay shrinkage and soil erosion are two of the biggest causes in the UK and heatwaves and higher temperatures make homes more susceptible to the risk of subsidence as a drier soil results in clay shrinkage.



The four main causes of subsidence are:

- Clay soil shrinking following long spells of dry weather
- Trees and other vegetation taking moisture from the soil causing it to shrink
- Leaking drains, which wash away the subsoil below your foundations
- Mining activity



Prevention at the forefront

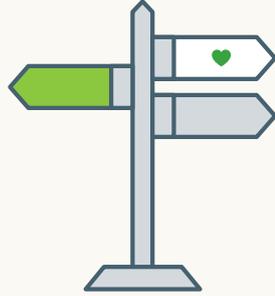
Apart from moving to a different part of the country or doing a little rain dance, there's not much you can do to escape dry clay soil. But there are things you can do to manage the risk of subsidence.

- If your home's foundations are built on clay soil, make sure you hydrate the area around your home to stop shrinkage and cracking
- Go for porous materials, like gravel or grass, instead of concrete or tarmac – they help water drain through naturally
- If you're in a sandy area, check water pipes and drainage systems regularly for leaking water which can wash away or soften soil – this is especially important for older houses where tree roots may have grown through clay pipes
- Prune trees and large shrubs to prevent soil from drying out - get this done by professionals if you need to



Spotting the real signs

- Large diagonal cracks at the edges of windows and doors - usually wider at the top than the bottom and around 3mm thick or thicker than a 10p coin
- Doors and windows difficult to open, stick for no reason or close easily in winter but not in the summer
- Tearing wallpaper with no signs of damp
- Sinking foundations or sloping floors
- Sinking or dips in pathway or driveway



What's NOT a sign of subsidence?



- Tilting large trees outside the home
- Bulging floorboards
- Damp patches appearing
- Signs of mould
- Musty odour



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