

Subsidence

What are the signs?

Understanding early signs is key to prevent and deal with subsidence issues. When it comes to subsidence, early detection and action can make a big difference to your home.



The main causes of subsidence

- 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

Understanding how to manage the risk of subsidence can help you avoid long-term damage to your home.

- 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.



What is subsidence?

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

- ✓ 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 signs of subsidence

- ✓ 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 that are 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

