

# Indications of Foundation Problems

You can determine this for yourself if you examine your house carefully. Here is a checklist for you to follow:

1. Cracks in the interior walls. Look at all the corners of windows and doors, and at joints where walls meet walls, ceilings or doors for signs that they are pulling away from each other. Cracks in a brick fireplace wall.
2. Nails "popping" out of the gypsum board.
3. Raise and lower the windows in each room, open and close all doors. Do they fit squarely without binding?
4. Outside the house, check the bottom corners of windows and doors. Do cracks run diagonally, along mortar joints in the brick veneer? Are the caulked joints pulling apart?
5. Check the exposed concrete at the base of the house for cracks. If there are only small cracks, they may also be nonstructural, but they may also be the first indication of trouble to come.
6. If possible, check the house after or during a rain. Does water stand in ponds near the house? Proper drainage is essential. Roof leaks when roof material is in good shape.
7. Are trees planted near the house? Remember the guideline. A tree should be as far away from the house as its *mature height*.
8. Check gutters and downspouts. Do they empty onto a splash block? And does the roof runoff drain away from the house?
9. Ask to see the soil report upon which the foundation was designed. It may not be available, but it would be helpful.

If your inspection of the house reveals any evidence of foundation problems, require that the seller take the necessary steps to insure the useful life of the house. This can be done as a condition of the sale, with the closing of the sale to be delayed until all the required work is completed.

Problems like these should not be taken lightly. Cracks in the interior walls are unsightly and reduce the value of your house, cracks in the brick walls admit wind and rain that damage the sheathing insulation and interior walls. Poorly fitted window sills and doors let in outside air and result in high utility bills. Roof loads damage the wooden beams, insulation, interior walls and ceiling, and electrical wiring. Shifting of the soil foundation may also cause gas and water lines to loosen or bend, creating unsafe conditions and fire hazards.

The purchase of a home is probably the largest single investment the average family will make in a lifetime. The home should be properly constructed and, with proper maintenance, not require major repairs.

Remember, however, that your house may be in potential danger from the action of the soil even though there are no present signs of it.

- If the house is new, or recently constructed:
- If it has not been through a very wet season followed by a long dry one:
- If the trees planted near it are still small:
- If there have been no heavy rains to wash out the soil from an area which allows too much drainage, or to saturate and swell that soil which does not have good drainage:

then the house may be in danger of future problems, even though you cannot see the damage now. You may have years of satisfactory performance from your house before these factor will begin to cause cracks and other evidence of damage. If you are fortunate enough not to have repairs that need to be made at this time, then you can benefit from the maintenance suggestions on this website. These suggestions will help you preserve your home for many years of trouble-free living.