

Ask the

INSPECTOR...

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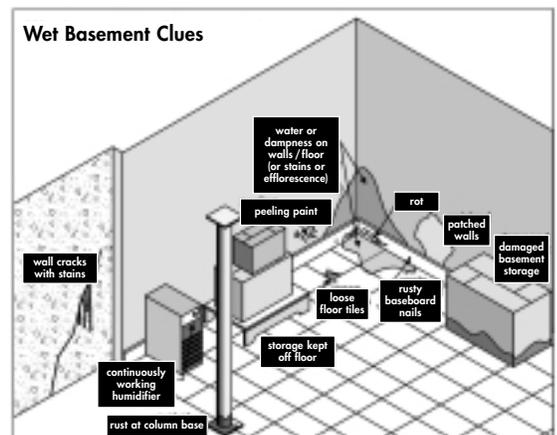
I am considering purchasing a home with an unfinished basement, that I would like to finish as extra living space for my family. How can I tell if the basement leaks?

Response provided by John Cooke, AmeriSpec of Canada

Renovating or finishing a basement is an economical way to increase the living space in a home. Every homeowner should be aware, however, that most basements are likely to suffer from some form of moisture problem during their life.

A recent survey undertaken by Health and Welfare Canada found that 38% of Canadian homes had indications of **excessive dampness or mold**. And even the most modern basements, which may remain dry for years, can suddenly become susceptible to moisture infiltration as settling occurs or conditions change around the home.

A qualified home inspector will conduct a visual inspection of the entire property for signs such as cracks, dampness or discoloration, which could indicate if or where the risk of a leak is apparent. A thorough inspection will investigate all accessible areas of the home, including the exterior, the slope of the earth around the house, the eavestroughing and downspouts, window wells and basement windows, vegetation close to the home, the foundation, joints between the foundation and patios or driveways, and the



interior. In addition, a professional home inspection will also go far beyond the basement, to examine and assess plumbing and heating systems, the structural components of the roof and foundation, electrical and air conditioning systems, and interior and exterior building materials and finishes.

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I've had conflicting quotes ranging from \$1200 to \$8000 to repair basement leaks in my home. What should I do?

Response provided by Roger Orvis, AmeriSpec of Etobicoke Ontario

Simple, inexpensive tasks should always be performed before undertaking any major repairs. One of the benefits in dealing with a qualified home inspector is that he or she is not there to make repairs, but to assist you with recommendations for your specific situation. In many cases, a visual inspection can identify deficiencies and suggest easy, inexpensive solutions. Simply directing water away from foundation walls or ensuring that eavestroughing is functioning properly, for example, can solve many moisture problems with little or no expense.

If you're facing more extensive problems, more intensive means of combating moisture are available, depending on the nature of your basement, the extent of the dampness, the physical characteristics of your site and the cost. But whatever route you choose, the first step is to identify the problem: by taking the time to educate yourself prior to bringing in a professional, you'll profit from a higher quality solution.

I have an older home for sale with what I feel is insignificant moisture in the basement. Other homes are selling for top dollar, but this moisture is stopping potential buyers from making an offer. Why is this such an issue?

Response provided by Roger Orvis, AmeriSpec of Etobicoke Ontario

Older homes weren't built with the idea of dry, habitable basements in mind. In such cases, some moisture or dampness is normal. Nonetheless, high moisture levels are considered undesirable for the following reasons:

- (a) They impact on the occupants' quality of life and usable interior space;
- (b) They can damage the basement's structure, finishes and personal effects stored there; and,
- (c) They can have an adverse effect on the health of occupants. Dr. Fugler, a building science researcher at Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, randomly studied 400 homes and found that "50% of the basements had evidence of moisture damage at some time. Wherever you had chronic wetting, you had mold. [And] wherever you had mold, you had at least one toxicogenic [unhealthy] mold."

As discussed above, a qualified home inspector can help identify the source of moisture in your basement, and recommend simple, low cost solutions to address your problem.

**For further information
please contact:**

