



Handy Repair & Maintenance Tips

A helpful guide to maintaining your Swan home

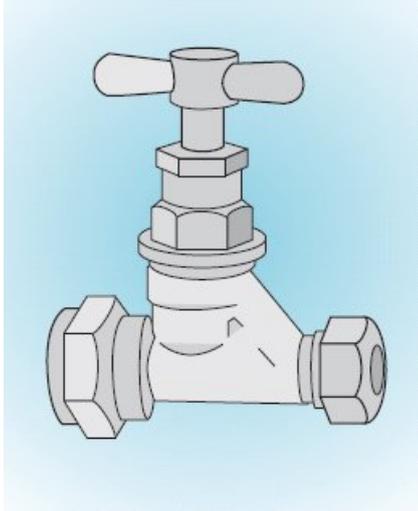
Please remember YOU are responsible for keeping your home in a sanitary condition.

Swan are not responsible for keeping your property clean or carrying out minor repairs and you may be charged for any damage outside of normal wear and tear to the property.

Maintaining your home

Turning off the water supply

If you have a problem with a water leak you will have to turn off your water supply at the stopcock.



Stop valve or 'stopcock'

Turning the stopcock off will stop the water supply to the property.

It is important to know where your stopcock (or stop valve) is located in case you need to turn off your water supply in a hurry. You will be told where to find it when you first move in. Check where it is and turn it off and on a few times each year so that it does not seize up.

Gate valves (which usually have a circular round top) will be located in other places in the pipe work. These valves can be used to turn off the water, for example to the water tank, sink or boiler.

The stopcock is usually close to where the mains water enters the property, often near to the kitchen sink.

Frozen pipes

Frozen pipes can cause bursts and leaks. If you are going on holiday in winter, you could turn off the water supply at the stopcock and drain the hot and cold water system by turning on the taps. Alternatively you could consider leaving the heating on very low.

Blocked toilets

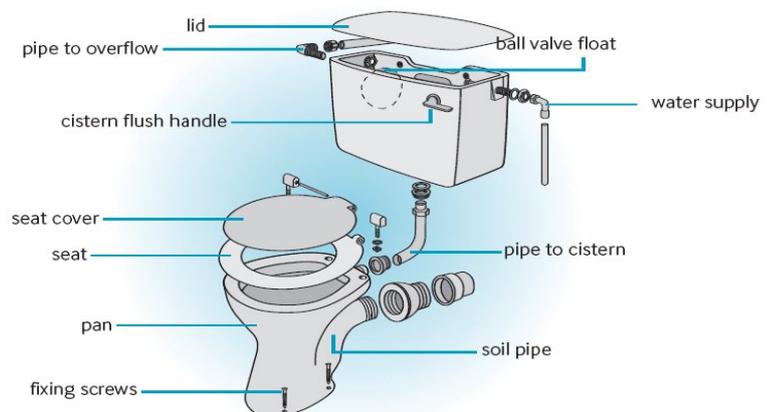
Blocked toilets can sometimes be cleared by pouring a few buckets of water down the pan. If this does not work, do not keep using the toilet or flushing it as this will make the problem worse. Ring Swan's repairs freephone number on 0800 783 2768 to arrange for someone to look at the problem.

NEVER put nappies, sanitary towels, fat or grease down the toilet as this will block it

Overflows

If the toilet overflow is leaking (usually to an overflow pipe outside the building), this can usually be solved by adjusting the float in the cistern so that it is higher.

An overflowing cistern can be temporarily stopped by lifting and tying up the arm to the ball valve inside the cistern.



Limescale

Many areas have 'hard water', to avoid the build up of white deposits of limescale try and use a special remover liquid on things like shower heads and screens, and kitchen sinks/draining boards.

You can use less soap in a washing machine if you add some water softener. Ask at a DIY shop or supermarket for this.

Blocked sinks/basins



Avoid putting fats and grease and anything other than liquid down any sink. If you do, you will risk blocking your sinks and/or drains. If you have a blockage in your sink you can try:

- Using a plunger or a special liquid to unblock it. Both can be bought from local DIY stores or supermarkets.
- Unscrewing the plastic bottle trap (or 'p trap') underneath the sink or basin and cleaning it out.

The 'p trap' should be quite easy to unscrew without any tools. Make sure the taps are turned off first and put a bucket or other container underneath it to collect any water. Once cleaned out, replace the bottle trap and make sure it is screwed back tightly.

If a tap is leaking from its spout, it will require a new washer. Normally this will be your responsibility but do let us know if you are unable to fix it for any reason.

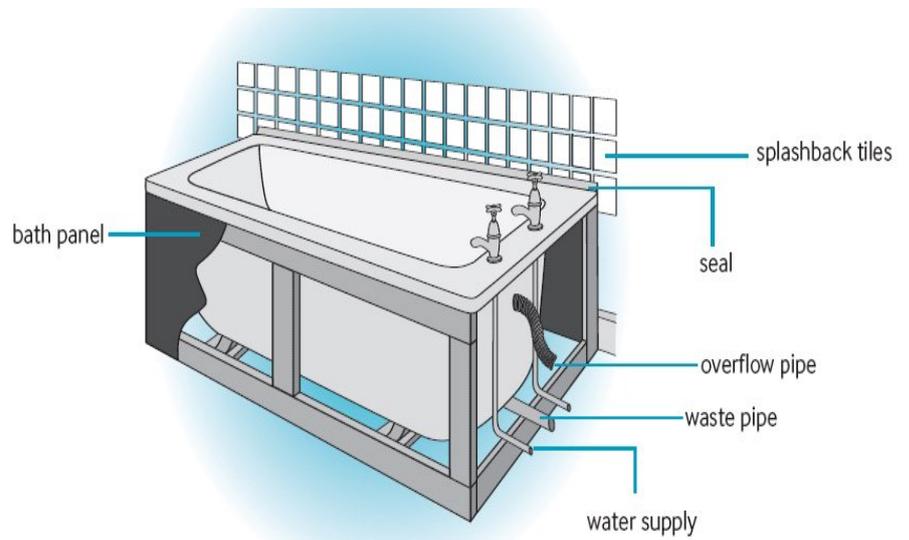
Showers and baths

Water seals

A damaged seal between a tiled splashback and a bath or shower tray can result in damage to walls, ceilings and flooring.

A silicon sealant will help prevent problems, but also avoid excessive water around these areas.

Use an anti-mould spray from time to time around seals to prevent black mould growing.



Condensation

Condensation occurs when moist air comes into contact with air, or a surface which is a lower temperature. You can get black mould/mildew growing on walls and round corners of baths and showers if you do not let condensation escape.

You can get condensation if you dry clothes on radiators or in a tumble drier, it will also occur if you let the kitchen or bathroom get steamy and don't open the windows.

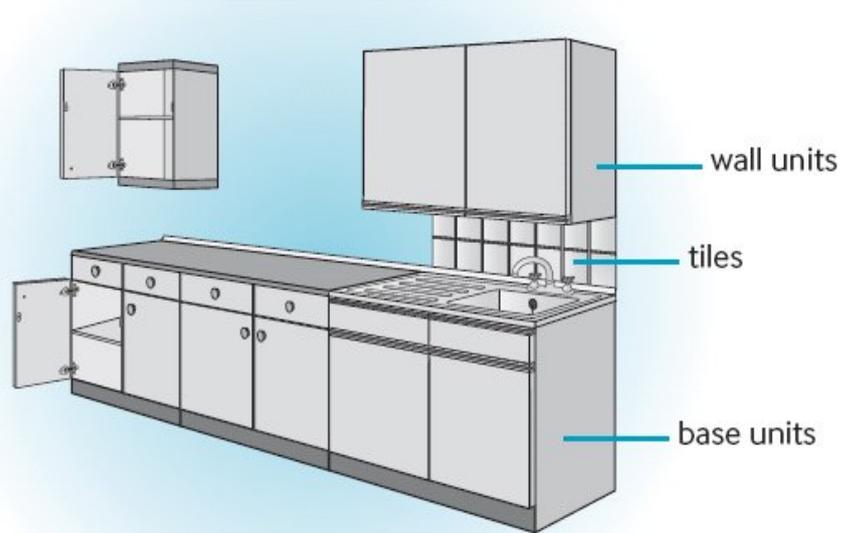
Condensation is more noticeable when it forms on non-absorbent surfaces (i.e. windows or tiles) but it can form on any surface and it may not be noticed until mould grows.

Kitchens

Kitchen units will last for 15 to 20 years if they are looked after in a reasonable way.

Avoid leaning on the doors or open drawers and don't use knives to cut directly onto the worktop, always use a cutting block or bread board.

You are responsible for keeping the kitchen in a sanitary condition; ensure that it is kept clean and dry to help avoid rot and/or pests.



Rats, mice, ants and other pests

Pests found within the home, such as rats, mice, cockroaches, ants or fleas are your responsibility. Contact your local council's Pest Control department if you would like a visit from someone regarding any pests you may have. Please note the council may charge you for this service.

Some things you can do that can help avoid and resolve pest problems;

- Avoid accumulating rubbish in areas that can attract pests and keep food in airtight containers.
- Do not leave food waste in plastic bags in an outside area, always put food waste in a bin with a lid.
- Use remedies that you can buy from a local DIY/hardware stores e.g. flea and ant powders, insect sprays, mouse traps or poison

Gardens

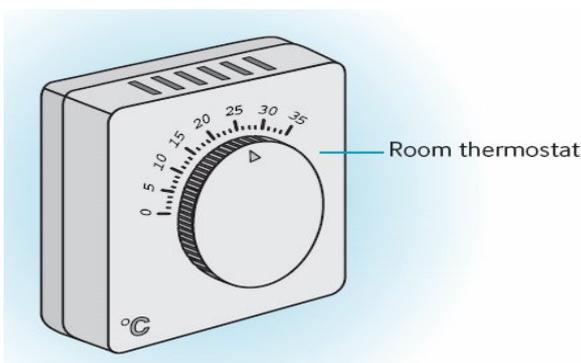
If you have your own garden or outside space you are responsible for its upkeep. Please remember:

- Don't let shrubs or hedges get too overgrown
- Cut the grass regularly in summer
- Don't accumulate rubbish of any sort

If you live in a flat, don't leave any rubbish in the communal gardens or allow your pets to foul there.

Smoke detectors

Smoke detectors should be checked (by pressing the test button) at least every three months. If you have battery smoke detectors these will bleep if the battery is low. Always replace the battery in the smoke detector promptly - do not leave it without a battery. If you have no smoke detector, they can be bought from a DIY shop.



Room thermostats (where provided)

A room thermostat controls the heating to maintain the temperature it has been set at. A comfortable room temperature is usual between 18° and 22° C.

Remember that by reducing your room temperature by as little as 1° C you can save energy and cut your heating costs.

Ventilation of gas appliances

If the vent of a gas appliance gets blocked or sealed off, carbon monoxide can build up. This is extremely dangerous and carbon monoxide can kill even though you can't smell it, see it or taste it. Never block any vents.

Annual gas safety checks - you must let the gas contractor in

At Swan we are dedicated to ensuring that services within your home are safe and maintained to current legal standards. If your home has a gas boiler, this will require a safety inspection at least once every 12 months. As part of your tenancy agreement you are obliged to let the Corgi-registered gas contractor in to carry out this check. We cannot stress the importance of allowing our contractors access to your home for this very important service.

Should our contractors report back to us that they have not been allowed access to your home we will contact you as a matter of urgency and you will be required to book an appointment for our gas contractors to call and inspect your boiler and/or any other gas appliance within your home. Residents who continue to ignore these requests for access will face legal action and will be responsible for any costs which are incurred through court action.

URGENT

If you smell gas follow these four steps:

- 1: Turn off the gas supply**
The main gas on/off handle is usually next to your gas meter.
- 2: Open windows and doors to let the gas disperse.**
- 3: Do NOT light matches/lighters or switch on lights or sockets.**
Sparks from these can ignite gas.
- 4: Ring the National Grid on 0800 111 999**



Keeping out damp and mould

What is damp and what causes it?

If your home is damp it can cause mould on your walls and furniture and rot wooden window frames. Damp homes can always encourage mites and can increase the risk of respiratory illness.

There is always some moisture in the air, and when the air gets colder it can't hold all the moisture and tiny droplets of water appear. This is condensation, and it is a major cause of damp. You may have noticed it when you breathe on a cold day, or when the mirror mists over when you run a bath. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little air movement, so you should check in corners, on or around windows and behind wardrobes and cupboards for sign of damp, such as mould growth and/or a musty smell. Although condensation is the major cause of damp, it can also come from:

- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows
- Rain getting through holes in roofs, spilling from a blocked gutter, penetrating around window frames or leaking through a cracked pipe.
- Rising damp because of a faulty damp course.
- If your home is newly built it could be damp because water used during its construction (in plaster, for example) is still drying out.

If your home is damp for any of these reasons, please let us know as soon as possible.

How to avoid damp

Heat your home

In cold weather keep some low background heating on all day, even when no one is at home. We appreciate that heating your home can be costly and that leaving your heating on when you are out could appear wasteful, but if it is at a low level then the boiler will not have to work as hard to reheat the home.

Treatment of mould

If you find mould growing in your home you can treat it very easily. To kill and remove mould, wipe down the walls and window frames where it is growing with a fungicidal wash, following the instructions carefully. Anti-mould fungicidal washes are available from most supermarkets and DIY stores. Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets. It is not a good idea to disturb mould by brushing or vacuuming as this can increase the risk of respiratory problems. After washing down surfaces as described above, they can be painted with a good quality fungicidal paint if required.

A few words of warning

- Don't block wall or window ventilators in rooms.
- Don't completely block chimneys.
- If there is a louvered grill do not cover it.
- Don't draughtproof rooms where there is condensation or mould.
- Don't draughtproof rooms where there is a cooker or fuel burning heater.
- Don't draughtproof windows in the bathroom or kitchen.

How can you avoid damp and condensation?

Produce less moisture

- Cover pans when cooking and don't leave kettles boiling.
- Do not use paraffin or calor gas heaters as these put a lot of moisture in the air.
- Dry washing outdoors on a line, or in the bathroom with the door closed and a window open or extractor fan on.
- Vent tumble dryers directly to the outside.
- Switch on extractor fans if you have them.

Ventilate to remove moisture

- Keep a small window ajar or trickle ventilator open when someone is in the room.
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by opening windows, especially when cooking or using the bath or shower.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes and avoid filling them too much, as this prevents air circulating.
- Use slatted shelves and/or have breather holes put in the back of wardrobes. Leaving a space between wardrobes and walls also helps.

If you require a repair to your home please ring

Swan's repairs freephone on:

0800 783 2768

