

Caulking

Caulking refers to the materials used to seal gaps, holes, and joints between surfaces, trim, and fixtures inside your home. They will deteriorate over time from exposure, use and movement, so regular inspection and restoration of the caulking is important to maintain water- and air-tightness.

Cracks in the caulking joints between tile and tub, in the shower stall corners, and at the floor, are caused by the high degree of moisture present in every bathroom, as well as from the normal shrinkage of caulking material. Separation between the tub and wall tile is caused by home settlement and by the weight of the water-filled tub.

Maintaining caulked areas is extremely important to the proper maintenance of your home. Over time, and especially in hot or humid weather, caulking will dry and shrink, no longer providing a good seal against moisture and air. Caulking and sealant are addressed here and elsewhere in your guide as they protect several important parts of your home. They are specifically covered in the pages that cover tubs, showers, and fixtures. The maintenance of windows, doors, trim, and siding on the exterior are also covered in this guide.

Types of Caulking

Silicone sealant is best for joints between smooth, nonporous materials such as tile, glass, stainless steel, and enameled fixtures.

Latex or Butyl sealant is less expensive and a lower grade (often referred to as “painter’s caulk”), and is more appropriate for interior and exterior non-critical “hole-filling” before painting.

These sealants are available in different colors to help match adjoining finishes. Follow the sealant manufacturers’ recommendations on the package, remembering that cleaning and preparing joints and adjoining surfaces per the instructions is critical for an effective caulk joint.

Important Information

- **When to Replace Caulking.** Caulking should not be cracked, split, or incompletely adhered. If any of these conditions are identified, remove and replace the caulking.
- **Follow Instructions.** Always read and follow the manufacturer’s instructions on the caulking package for proper use and storage. Use the appropriate caulking for the application.

- **What Not to Caulk.** Do not caulk window sill drains as these are intended to remain clear for drainage. Take note of what was or was not caulked as part of the original construction. Areas typically sealed include: interior joints formed by dissimilar materials such as sheetrock to wood trim, tile or plastic laminate, or the interior edge of window frames or door frames. Also seal between fixtures or electrical devices and walls, counters, or floors.
- **Proper Preparation.** As with repainting, caulking is only as effective as its preparation. Existing caulking should be removed completely and the surface cleaned per the manufacturer's recommendations.

Recommended Maintenance Tasks	Frequency
Inspect the caulk joints around fixtures, tub and shower areas, ceramic tile, and doors or windows on the interior where caulking was installed. Remove and replace as needed when it is split or coming off.	Monthly

Effects of Deferred Maintenance

The consequences of faulty caulking depend on the location of the caulking. Faulty water seals may result in damage to surrounding materials, structural damage, discoloration, and mold/fungus growth.