

# Exterior Walls

## EXTERIOR WALLS: OVERVIEW

This section discusses the preventive maintenance tasks that are necessary to keep the exterior surfaces of your home weathertight and looking their best.

### General Guidelines

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- **Trim Trees and Plants**

Keep trees and other plantings trimmed to prevent them from impacting or brushing the wall finish during windy periods, as well as to allow proper ventilation and drying of walls near plantings.

- **Maintain Proper Drainage**

Make sure gutters and downspouts are clear and ground surfaces are properly sloped to keep water moving away from the base of the foundation. Prevent splashing from roof runoff that can stain and deteriorate wall finishes. Soil buildup or erosion around the house can affect the drainage characteristics and contribute to deterioration of the walls.

- **Keep the Walls Clean**

Keep walls and ledges clear of dust and debris build-up, which can stain exterior finishes. Particularly on consistently shaded surfaces, dirt and moisture can cause mildew growth and harm the finish.

- **Keep an Eye on Water**

Your home has been designed and built to withstand normal weather; however, keep concentrated water such as roof-edge drainage from dripping or flowing onto walls and ledges. This will help prevent leaks, finish deterioration, and staining from dirt that is carried down with roof runoff. Take care to prevent irrigation overspray from spraying onto your home.

- **Do Not Puncture the Surfaces**

Avoid any added penetrations of the exterior walls (attaching new wiring, shade covers, etc.) unless absolutely necessary. You cannot hold GHO Homes Corporation responsible for damages resulting from after-market changes to walls. Additions should be made by a qualified professional and sealed in a manner consistent with the exterior construction of the building.

## STUCCO

Exterior stucco is a durable, low-maintenance finish. It requires regular inspection and maintenance to keep it performing its best and to prevent the possibility of water intrusion.



Stucco Siding

### Important Information

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- **Protect the Stucco.** As with all exterior walls, prevent water from dripping onto the stucco and from splashing up from gutter downspouts.
- **Cracking is Normal.** Stucco is a cement product, and has the same properties as concrete. Occasional hairline cracks can be expected, due to expansion and settling and may not be a defect in workmanship. Cracks in stucco are generally cosmetic in nature, and should be patched to avoid the collection of dirt and debris. Clean cracks to remove dirt that may have collected, and seal with an acrylic stucco patch and color match.
- **Hints for Patching.** Should your stucco finish require minor patching, there are stucco patch products available at home improvement stores. Stucco patching, especially at cracks, can be tricky and difficult to achieve permanence and an acceptable appearance. Significant patches are best performed by a qualified professional who can match and blend texture and color.
- **Cracks.** Should small cracks appear in your stucco due to shrinkage, we recommend that you fill the crack with caulk. Once the caulk is dry, repaint the area over the caulk with paint that matches the stucco color. Refer to the Sealants section for more information on selecting the proper caulk.

- **Discoloration.** If it is an integrally color coated stucco finish, do not be alarmed by wet “blotches” after rain. This is normally occurring surface absorption. However, repeated roof runoff or sprinkler overspray can cause discoloration of the stucco.
- **Keep the Foundation Clear.** Keep a minimum of four inches of clearance between the bottom of the stucco termination and the grade or landscaping (check local codes; some experts recommend six to eight inches). Keep a minimum of two inches (4-6" preferred) clearance between the screed and the top of any walking or hard surfaces. (See the “Foundations” section in this guide for additional information.)
- **Integral Color Coats.** If your stucco has an integral color coat, it should not be necessary to paint it for many years. If repainting becomes necessary, be sure you properly clean and prepare surfaces, seal where needed, and prime and paint with products recommended by a recognized paint manufacturer or store.

## Cleaning Tips

Always begin with the most mild cleaning methods, and use stronger cleaners only when necessary. Try clean water and a soft brush first, and add mild soap if water is not strong enough. For tougher dirt or stains, use low-pressure water or appropriate chemical cleansers that are designed to remove dirt, grime, rust and other stains without harming the stucco surface. Consult the manufacturer’s or installer’s documentation prior to performing any maintenance tasks.

Recommended Maintenance Tasks	Frequency
Inspect surfaces for chipping or cracking. Repair chipped or cracked stucco with a stucco repair product.	Annually
Clean surfaces with a light pressure wash. Be careful around doors and windows where pressurized spray can actually seep around flashing and into wall framing.	Annually
Repaint or refoam the stucco as weathering and exposure indicate.	Every 3–5 years and as needed

## Effects of Deferred Maintenance

Failure to keep water off the stucco can cause discoloration which would require the application of a new fog coat to the stucco. Water penetrating chipped or cracked stucco can damage walls.