

The National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) recommends you do a roof inspection at least two times a year - spring and fall.

You should begin your inspection in your attic. Some things to look for are:

- Places where the roof deck is sagging
- Signs of water damage or leaking
- Dark spots and trails
- Outside light showing through the roof.

When you take a look at the exterior of the roof, be on the look out for damaged flashing, missing shingles, curling, blistering, buckling, rotting and algae growth.

Some tips for your exterior inspection:

- Visually inspect your roof for cracked, torn, bald or missing shingles.
- Look for loose material or wear around chimneys, vents, pipes or other penetrations.
- Watch for an excessive amount of shingle granules (they look like large grains of sand) in the gutters. This is a sign of advanced wear.
- Check for signs of moisture, rot or mold. Note that wet spots may not be directly under your faulty shingle; water can travel down to its lowest spot before it drips. Mold, fungi and bacteria can grow quickly, within 24 to 48 hours of water-related problems.
- Examine the drainage, and make sure gutters and downspouts are securely attached. Also, ensure all drains are open and allow water to exit, and all gutters and downspouts are free of debris.
- Check that all bath, kitchen and dryer vents go entirely outside of your home, not just into the attic space.

What Is Your Roof Made Of?

What your roof is made of plays a big part in determining whether it should be replaced or not. A cedar roof in need of repair or replacement will split and fall apart in dry climates and get mossy in moist ones. Most cedar roofs have a life span of about 20 years. Tile roofs can last up to 100 years but can be broken or cracked and will need to be replaced by a specialist. If you have a concrete roof, you should never need to replace it. If you have a roof with wooden shakes, you should also watch out for damage from termites, carpenter ants and/or other wood-boring pests.

Repair or Replace?

If during your inspection you notice any of the above issues, call in a licensed roof contractor for advice. If you do need a new roof, be aware that this isn't an average "do-it-yourself" type of project. It's tough work and can be dangerous. Being that it's something you really want done right, it's best left up to the professionals.