

Sewer Gas / Plumbing Checklist

A practical record of sulfur odors, slow drains, dry traps, and venting concerns.

Print this page to add a Sewer Gas / Plumbing Checklist to your Tracking Symptom Binder — re-run this after any plumbing work, vacancy, or seasonal shift — P-traps can dry faster than expected.

WHAT IT IS

Sewer gas entering through plumbing gaps

Sewer gas is a mixture of hydrogen sulfide, methane, ammonia, and trace VOCs released as wastewater breaks down. The main barrier keeping it out of living spaces is a water-filled P-trap below every drain. When those traps dry out, crack, or lose their seal, gas can move into the home.

SIGNS WORTH NOTICING

Odors near drains, fixtures, and lower levels

An intermittent sulfur or rotten egg smell near floor drains, infrequently used bathrooms, or the basement is the most familiar sign. Slow drains, gurgling sounds at fixtures, and a toilet that rocks slightly at the base are additional indicators that the plumbing system may have a gap or pressure issue.

WHY IT GETS MISSED

Odor fades with exposure and comes and goes

Hydrogen sulfide can cause olfactory fatigue — the ability to smell it diminishes with ongoing exposure, so people living with a slow leak may stop noticing it entirely. Odors also tend to appear and disappear with weather, HVAC cycles, and water use, making them difficult to trace to a source.

WHAT TO NOTICE

Drain use, humidity, and symptom location

Note whether the smell appears near specific rooms or drains, whether it changes after heavy rain or when the HVAC runs, and whether symptoms feel worse in lower levels of the home. Tracking which drains are used regularly and which sit idle is often the most direct route to the source.

DATE CHECKED _____ AREAS COVERED _____

Check anything you notice. This is a record of observations, not conclusions — there are no wrong answers.

01 Odors & drains

- Sulfur, rotten egg, or sewage smell near drains, fixtures, or lower levels
Faint sulfur smell near the basement floor drain — strongest in the morning.
- Slow-draining sinks, tubs, or floor drains in any room
- Gurgling or bubbling sounds at any fixture when water runs elsewhere

02 P-traps & seals

- Infrequently used drains — basement floor drain, guest bath, utility sink — that may have dry P-traps
- Toilet in any bathroom with visible rocking, movement, or soft flooring at the base

03 Symptom patterns

- Headache, nausea, or fatigue that feels worse in bathrooms, the kitchen, or lower levels
- Symptoms that shift after plumbing use, flushing, or running water
- More than one household member with overlapping symptoms in or near lower levels

OBSERVATIONS

DRAINS OR ROOMS WHERE ODOR IS MOST NOTICEABLE

CONDITIONS WHEN ODOR APPEARS (RAIN, HVAC RUNNING, AFTER FLUSHING)

NOTES

A checklist is a snapshot. The patterns that matter most tend to appear when you compare one across weeks, seasons, and rooms.