

## **Persistent Damp Patches on Chimney Breasts**

### **Causes, Diagnosis and Effective Solutions**

Are you dealing with damp patches on your chimney breast that remain long after a chimney leak has been repaired? This issue is more common than many homeowners realise and is often caused by factors beyond simple water ingress. This guide explains why damp can persist and outlines practical, long-lasting solutions.

### **Understanding the Problem**

Damp patches on chimney breasts are rarely straightforward. In chimneys that were historically used for open fires or solid fuel burners, soot builds up over time. When moisture penetrates the chimney and interacts with this soot, the soluble salts dissolve into the water.

As this moisture migrates through the chimney breast, it eventually reaches the plaster. The water can evaporate into the air, but the salts do not. Instead, they crystallise within the plaster where they become trapped. These salts are hygroscopic, meaning they draw moisture from the surrounding air, particularly in warm or humid conditions.

This process explains why damp marks can continue to appear even after external leaks have been repaired. Although no further water is entering the structure, the salt contaminated plaster continues to absorb atmospheric moisture, creating persistent staining and dampness.

In some cases, the salts can undergo deliquescence, where they absorb so much moisture that they dissolve again and become mobile, leading to further damage over time.

### **How to Resolve Persistent Damp Patches**

Solving chimney damp issues requires a structured approach. The following measures can help restore and protect your walls effectively.

#### **1. Inspect for Leaks**

The first priority is to ensure there is no ongoing water ingress. Common areas of concern include defective flashings, damaged pointing and uncapped or open chimney pots. After repairs, make sure the chimney stack is ventilated well to prevent moisture becoming trapped.

#### **2. Improve Ventilation**

Even unused chimneys need airflow. Many chimney related damp problems are caused by stagnant, moisture filled air inside the flue. Proper ventilation prevents condensation build up and reduces the risk of damp returning.

### 3. Reassess the Existing Plaster

Many modern repairs involve sand and cement backing plasters finished with gypsum. Although durable, cement-based plasters are not breathable. This lack of breathability can trap moisture within the masonry and may cause long term damp issues, especially in older buildings.

### 4. Consider Salt Resistant Lime Plasters

A more sympathetic and effective option is the use of lime-based plasters with salt inhibiting properties, such as Roman mortars. These traditional materials contain lime and volcanic aggregates which create an open pore structure. This allows moisture to escape while resisting further salt damage. Their breathability makes them ideal for older properties and areas with existing salt contamination.

### 5. Apply Desalination Poultices

For historic or heavily contaminated masonry, desalination poultices can be used to draw salts out of the wall. The poultice is applied wet, allowed to dry and then removed along with the extracted salts. Several applications may be needed before the wall can be replastered with lime.

### 6. Use Isolation Techniques Where Necessary

Protective methods such as lath and plaster or metal or timber stud systems can be used to create a separation between the contaminated chimney breast and the finished wall surface. This prevents moisture transfer and helps maintain a dry, stable finish.

### 7 : Regular Chimney Sweeping

Regular chimney sweeping also helps remove soot deposits and reduces the risk of future salt related problems.

### Conclusion

Persistent damp on chimney breasts can be complex, but with the right understanding and remedial measures, it can be fully resolved. By repairing leaks, improving ventilation, choosing breathable and salt resistant materials, using desalination techniques and applying isolation methods, long term protection can be achieved.

If you are experiencing ongoing chimney damp, you can contact us at [dminfo@trioradampandmould.co.uk](mailto:dminfo@trioradampandmould.co.uk) or visit [www.trioradampandmould.co.uk](http://www.trioradampandmould.co.uk)



## Chimney Breast Salt Damp Remediation

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