

Spotting the signs of boiler breakdown

Have you noticed some odd goings-on with your boiler, hot water or radiators lately? From strange whistling and popping sounds coming from your boiler (also known as kettling) to temperamental hot water and cold spots on radiators, these are all signs that sludge may have built-up in your heating system and is causing problems.

Sludge is the number one cause of boiler breakdowns in the UK and is costing consumers over £700million pounds in repair bills. The symptoms you may have experienced while spending more time at home are all signs that a breakdown could be heading your way, so it's important to act now.

Contact your local heating engineer who can treat your system to not only help prevent a breakdown, but also to make it run more efficiently, saving you up to £80 a year on your energy bills.

Here's a list of 'sludge symptoms' to look out for:

- Cold spots in radiators
- Kettling noises from the boiler
- Water that isn't hot
- Water heat that is temperamental
- Leaking/dripping from pipework or the boiler
- Loss in pressure of the boiler
- Boiler stops working and requires re-setting
- Unreliable thermostat
- Sticking thermostatic radiator valves

If you notice any of these, contact your local heating engineer as soon as possible. While you may be concerned about asking someone to enter your home at the moment, as long as you maintain a safe social distance from them, then the work can be carried out safely. The Heating and Hotwater Industry Council (HHIC) has issued [a guide](#) for heating engineers on how to safely work in people's homes. Before their visit, make sure you and your engineer are familiar with this advice and know what actions to take to protect each other.

If you are experiencing problems with your boiler, it's crucial you don't try and fix any issues yourself and wait for a qualified professional. However, there are some simple things you can do which can help you maintain your heating system and prolong its life:

1. Get your boiler and magnetic filter serviced by a qualified heating engineer every year
2. Keep an eye on the boiler pressure – it should usually be between 1 and 2 bar
3. Bleed your radiators at least every year
4. If you have taken a radiator off the wall or drained down your heating system, ensure you top up with protective inhibitor when filling the system back up with water
5. If you have a battery powered thermostat, check the batteries aren't flat
6. Turn your thermostat down by 1degree to save money on fuel costs
7. Turn thermostats down in rooms which aren't needing heat but regularly turn them to prevent the thermostat from 'sticking'
8. Check the timer is set to the most efficient times for your needs so heating and hot water is just right only when you need it
9. Speak to your heating engineer about the quality of the water in your home and considering fitting a magnetic filter to protect the boiler from sludge damage

With many of us spending much more time in the home recently, it's the perfect opportunity to get to grips with what's going on with your heating system, and call upon a qualified heating engineer to tackle and prevent the damage sludge can do and ultimately, stop a potential costly and very inconvenient boiler breakdown before it happens. Most importantly, removing sludge from the system and protecting it could extend the life of your boiler by up to 7 years.