

# Damp, mould and condensation

It is very important for our tenants to be able to spot the early signs of damp and mould, and how to tackle it.

Damp and mould are not the same thing.

The presence of damp can cause mould growth, but it is more common for mould to be caused by condensation forming in our homes.

Mould is a fungus that grows from tiny spores that move naturally around the home. Spores need enough moisture and a food source, such as emulsion, wallpaper and wood.

In these conditions spores may grow and spread and appear as the black spots we associate with mould.

## Condensation

When this warm moist air touches a cold surface, such as windows and external walls, and in areas of our homes with little air movement, it can form water droplets called condensation. It is this condensation that can lead to mould growth.

There are 4 main factors that cause condensation.:

1. Too much moisture in the air
2. Not enough ventilation
3. Cold surfaces
4. The temperature of your home

To help prevent cold spots in your home it is important to keep your home heated throughout the day in winter. A minimum internal temperature of 18 degrees Celsius is recommended by The World Health Organisation.

However, try keeping your home between 19-21 degrees Celsius where possible.

Where you may have turned off the heating in rooms you don't use, set the radiator valve to 1.

This means that there is a little heat to take the chill off external wall and window surfaces.

Close curtains at night to keep the heat in and open them during the day to allow the sun to warm rooms naturally.

Mould will often grow in areas where there is little air movement such as:

- in cupboards and wardrobes
- behind furniture
- in corners of rooms

Please ensure you leave gaps for air to flow around furniture and between furniture and walls.

As there is always moisture in the air in our homes, there are some things you can do to help reduce the amount of moisture present:

Dry clothes outside where you can.

If you need to dry them indoors do so in one room such as the bathroom, on a clothes horse with the door shut and windows open or with the extractor on.

When washing or cooking, keep doors shut and turn extractor fans on.

This prevents steam moving to colder rooms including for around 20 minutes after you finish. The rest of the time leave doors open to allow circulation.

When cooking keep lids on your pans. This not only reduces escape of steam but can also save you money by cooking your food quicker.

Wipe down bathroom tiles, baths and shower screens after use and hang your towels up to dry.

Keep window trickle vents open, and open windows daily for approximately 15-30 minutes a day.

It is important to clean these vents and fans to ensure they can work properly, so routinely Hoover and wipe them down as part of your cleaning routine.

Open curtains and windows in bedrooms first thing in the morning. Then wipe down condensation from window frames and cills with a microfibre cloth.

In addition to this you can use moisture absorbers to help absorb some of the moisture.

## **Penetrating damp**

Penetrating damp happens when water seeps into a building.

This can happen when:

- the roof or rendering is damaged
- the gutters are blocked
- pipes are leaking or plumbing is damaged
- areas around sinks, showers or baths are damaged, such as cracked grouting or worn out sealant

## **Rising damp**

Rising damp happens when water rises from the ground through the floor and into the walls of the building. You can often see rising damp because it leaves a tide mark low down on affected walls.

If you think your home has building defects that could cause damp, or you spot penetrating or rising damp, it is important to let us know as soon as possible. Damp can cause a lot of damage if you ignore it as well as result in mould growth.

## **Cleaning mould**

It is important to clean away mould as soon as you see it and continue to do so regularly.

Fungicidal washes can be used to tackle mould. They are available from most hardware stores and should be used as directed by the manufacturer.

White Vinegar is a more environmentally friendly and often cheaper way of removing mould. If you have a large area of mould to clean use the vinegar neat, or for small patches mix it 50:50 with water and spray on the mould.

Let it sit on the mould for 60 minutes before wiping it away. It is important to wipe from the outer edges inwards to prevent further spread.

For those more difficult patches, mix 1 part white vinegar with 1 part baking soda, mix to a paste and apply. Leave for at least an hour, overnight where possible, before wiping away with a damp cloth.

When cleaning mould ensure you follow the below advice:

- use protective equipment such as gloves and masks, and ensure the room is well ventilated when cleaning the mould. However, shut doors to other rooms to stop mould spores spreading around your home
- throw away any cloths used to clean the mould
- throw away any soft furnishing such as toys, clothes where possible and shampoo areas such as carpets affected by mould
- clean off any mould growth as soon as you spot it.

- take pictures to help track progress, and to pass on to us should you need to escalate the issue further

## **Reporting damp and mould**

If you are a council tenant and have damp or mould in your home you can report it by calling the Housing Support Hub on 02380 285222.

We will have an online form available soon.