

Damp & mould

One of the main problems a home suffers in winter is damp and mould.

Every family produces moisture as part of everyday life from washing, cooking, even breathing! If this moisture is unable to escape from your home it will create damp on cold surfaces such as your walls and ceilings, which can encourage mould growth.

If you are experiencing damp and mould in your home, please follow the suggestions below and you will see an improvement within two to three weeks.

Key points

- Try and maintain a constant temperature in your home.
- Try and maintain a constant source of ventilation to your home.
- Dry clothes outside when possible.
- Wipe all moisture from windows and walls every day.
- Wash off any mould as soon as possible to prevent mould spores spreading.
- Remove wallpaper from damp walls.
- Keep your home as clean and free from dust as possible to stop mould spores spreading.

The main contributors to reduce damp and mould are heating and ventilation

Heating and ventilation

Heating

Try and keep the temperature in your living room at 21° and the rest of the home about 18°.

It is better to keep a constant temperature during winter than have periods when the heating is on and then off, as this allows the moist air to cool which may encourage mould growth.

North facing rooms are more prone to condensation and mould, so it is important to heat these rooms, even if they not occupied.

Ventilation

Lack of ventilation is a big contributor towards damp and mould. Having a small bit of ventilation in all rooms should create enough air movement around your home to take the warm moist air outside, without making your home feel cold. Keeping the trickle vents open (if fitted) or the window on the night latch should be sufficient.

This will also help remove dust and airborne pollutants from inside your home that are also considered to be a health risk.



The only time to open a window wide is in the bathroom after a bath or if you are cooking in the kitchen and the rooms do not have an extractor fan. Keep the window open for about 10 minutes after you have finished but keep the door shut so the steam does not get to the rest of your home.

Where fans are fitted use them whilst cooking and after a bath or shower so that all steam is extracted outside. If you have a fan that seems to turn itself on and off by itself, it may be fitted with a humidistat which is designed to switch the fan on when there are high levels of humidity in your home.

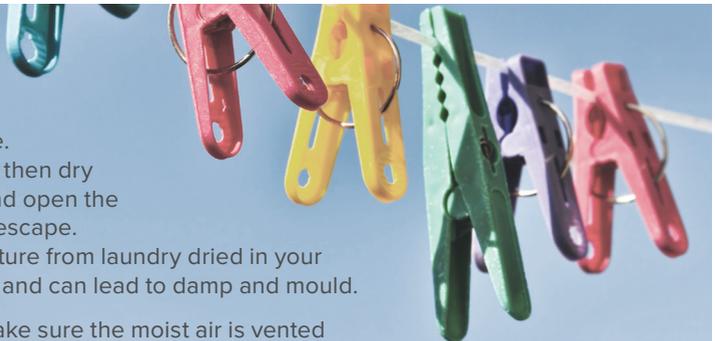
Clothes drying

Try to avoid drying clothes inside your home if possible.

If you have no other option, then dry your clothes in one room and open the window to let the damp air escape.

Remember that all the moisture from laundry dried in your home will become airborne and can lead to damp and mould.

If you use a tumble drier, make sure the moist air is vented directly outside.





General tips and dealing with mould

General tips



Wipe all moisture off surfaces every day and repeat if necessary during the day. Cold water pipes and cisterns to WC's may also collect moisture and need wiping.

Try to avoid having furniture and beds against outside walls and ensure there is plenty of space for air to circulate around your home. Unfortunately, having large amounts of possessions stored in rooms can create a lack of air circulation which will lead to dampness behind or in the possessions.

When cooking, keep lids on saucepans and have your extractor fan working.

Do not boil too much water in the kettle, as this will increase steam and cost you more money.

When running a bath, run the hot and cold together rather than running the hot (which creates steam) then adding the cold. Check that if your hot water tank has a lid, it is secure and not allowing steam to escape.

Remember, even house plants and fish tanks create moisture. Think about the amount of water you give to a house plant and the evaporation from a fish tank that needs topping up.

Keeping your home clean and free from animal hair is as important as washing away areas of mould. If possible use a vacuum cleaner with a dust filter and wipe down dusty hard surfaces with a damp cloth.

Dealing with mould

Current advice for treating mould is summarised as follows:

- Open windows to the room you are cleaning and shut the door to prevent the spread of spores.
- Use a protective mask, goggles and rubber gloves.
- Remove any furnishings and clothes affected with mould and mildew.
- Use a mild detergent in warm water and wash the mould away.
- Where appropriate, paint walls and ceilings with a kitchen and bathroom emulsion and avoid applying wall paper to areas likely to suffer from mould.

De-humidifiers

Finally you may wish to use a de-humidifier which will remove excess moisture in the air and can reduce the amount of condensation in your property.

Ask the expert

Mould and damp is creeping up the walls from the flat below. What can I do about this?

Mould spores are in the atmosphere and will stick to surfaces within your property when the conditions are cold and damp.

Mould will not creep up the walls from one flat to another. If you have mould in your property and do not wash it away, then the mould will spread along your walls.

How do I clean the mould from my property?

To help prevent the mould spores spreading within your home, close the door of the room, open the window and wash the mould away with a disposable cloth in warm water with a mild detergent.

Throw the disposable cloth away to prevent mould spores from spreading throughout your home.

Remember to keep washing mould off the walls to prevent the spores from spreading.

In the morning there is water running down my windows, what is causing this?

The water on the windows and walls is caused by condensation.

This condensation occurs when warm air comes into contact with cold surfaces, the window will mist up and eventually water will run down the window frame.

It is important to wipe down the windows daily when condensation builds up, as the moisture will attract mould spores to the damp surfaces.

How does the water get in to the property if I keep all my windows closed?

When the weather is cold outside we like to keep our windows closed to keep in the heat, but this means that all the moisture we produce during our daily activities (breathing, washing, cooking etc.) builds up and eventually becomes condensation.

In order to reduce the amount of moisture in the air, you need to reduce the amount

of moisture produced and allow the air to circulate within the home - please refer to the notes on ventilation and daily actions in this leaflet.

There is heating in my property but it is too expensive to use. What can be done about this?

Your landlord has a duty to ensure that there is heating available at the property, such as gas/ electric central heating, night storage heaters, or fixed electric heaters. As long as the heating provided is working, the landlord has fulfilled his obligations to you as the tenant.

Unfortunately, we are not able to help if the heating is too expensive for you to run, but we would suggest you investigate various suppliers to identify a more cost efficient payment plan.

My child has asthma/eczema and my doctor says I need to be re-housed immediately?

If your doctor provides a letter, this can be forwarded to our medical review board and we may be requested to visit and assess your property.

In the vast majority of properties we visit to assess for damp, the cause has been found to be condensation due to lack of heating and ventilation.

In such cases families will not be re-housed because of mould and damp, but we would give advice on how to reduce the problem.

My house is so cold, can I stop paying the rent until the landlord installs adequate heating?

We would not recommend that you stop paying your rent. As a tenant you have a legal obligation to pay your rent to the landlord.

If there is a source of heating within your property which is working then we will be unable to assist you, however if there is no heating within your home, then please call our Strategic Helpline on 023 8028 5151 to discuss and we may arrange for our Home Health and Safety surveyor to assess your property.