



# **Tenant Fact Sheet: Managing Condensation, Dampness and Mould in your Home**



# What is mould?

Mould is part of a group of very common organisms called fungi that also include mushrooms and yeast. It is present virtually everywhere, both indoors and outdoors.

Mould may grow indoors in wet or moist areas that lack adequate ventilation, including walls or wallpaper, ceilings, bathroom tiles, carpets (especially those with jute backing), insulation material and wood. If moisture accumulates, mould growth will often occur on indoor surfaces.

Many different types of mould exist, and they all have the potential to cause health problems.

Air mould can spring up anywhere, and it's hard to get rid of once it's taken hold. Here are a few simple ways to help you keep mould under control.

# What causes mould to grow indoors?

Mould only grows when there is sufficient moisture on a surface or humidity in the air.

Mould will only grow in damp unventilated rooms.



## Common causes include:

- » Condensation from cooking, showering, and clothes drying.
- » Surface areas where water is left to sit, like in bathrooms, toilets, the laundry and the kitchen.
- » Poorly ventilated rooms.
- » Excessive use of heaters in fully closed rooms.
- » Leaky roofs and walls, including blocked gutters and downpipes.
- » Leaky plumbing.

# How can I prevent mould from growing in my home?

Although mould can be found almost anywhere, it needs moisture and nutrients to grow.

The most important action you can take to prevent mould growth is to reduce dampness in the home. You can keep your home free of mould and mildew with a few preventive measures.



## 1. Maintain proper ventilation:

- » Open windows to help reduce the moisture and air out your home by improving cross ventilation. Be especially vigilant during hot, humid months.
- » Store items in dry, well-ventilated areas.
- » Turn on exhaust fans, particularly when bathing, showering, cooking, doing laundry and drying clothes.
- » Clean vents and fans regularly to prevent build-up.
- » Increase air circulation around furniture by moving the furniture away from the walls.
- » Clean the fabrics in your home routinely and keep them dry.
- » Evaporative coolers (fixed and mobile) increase the moisture content in indoor air, so the manufacturer's instructions should be followed to ensure airflow in the home.

## 2. Reduce humidity:

- » Wipe up excess water caused by condensation, such as on single-glazed windows and shower glazing.
- » Reduce condensation by using exhaust fans or open windows in the bathroom and kitchen when showering, cooking or using the dishwasher.
- » Limit the use of humidifiers.
- » Limit the number of fish tanks and indoor plants.
- » Limit the use of unflued gas heaters.



## 3. Control moisture and dampness:

- » Regularly clean out the gutters by removing leaf litter, dirt & dust.
- » Close doors and windows to prevent rain from entering the house.
- » Vent clothes dryers to the outside and clean lint filters according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- » Place door mats at the entry doors to wipe shoes to reduce tramping moisture from the underside of shoes into the house.
- » Wipe down wet surfaces, especially grout and joins.
- » Use moisture absorbers in cupboards to help keep them dry.
- » Avoid placing mattresses on the floor or surfaces without adequate ventilation.
- » Vacuum and/or turn mattresses every three months if it can be done safely.
- » If water enters your home, completely clean and dry water-damaged carpets and building materials. Discard material that cannot be cleaned and dried completely.

# How to prevent mould and mildew in the bathroom

Few rooms in the home see as much moisture and humidity as the bathroom. Besides making sure your bathroom stays well-ventilated, these additional actions will help.

- » Use the exhaust fan to circulate the air and remove moisture more quickly.
- » Spread towels out after use so that they dry more quickly.
- » Minimise containers left in the shower for cleaning ease and better circulation.
- » Wipe down the shower with a clean towel or squeegee after its last daily use.
- » Choose shower curtains that dry and clean easily to help avoid soap residue, which fosters mould.

# What the property owner will do to prevent water from getting into your home

- » Fix plumbing leaks as soon as possible, for example, burst water pipes and leaking taps.
- » Repair all water leaks, for example, a leaking roof or damaged gutters, windows and door seals.
- » Ensure sufficient exhaust openings to the outside of the house if a fixed evaporative cooling system is installed.
- » Maintain landlord-installed heating, ventilation and cooling systems according to the manufacturer's instructions.



# How can I remove mould from my home?

- » For routine clean-up of mouldy surfaces, use mild detergent or vinegar diluted in a water solution (4 parts vinegar to 1 part water). In many cases, household detergent or white vinegar will be sufficient. Use a microfibre cloth and regularly rinse the dirty cloth in a separate container of clean water to prevent mould from spreading.
- » If the mould is not readily removed and the item cannot be discarded, use a diluted bleach solution (250mls of bleach in 4 litres of cold water) to clean the surface. When using bleach, protective equipment is recommended: PVC or nitrile rubber gloves, safety glasses, and safety shoes. Make sure the area is well-ventilated while you are cleaning with bleach.
- » Apply the cleaner and give it time to work before you mop or sponge it up. Avoid getting areas too wet, and dry the area afterwards where possible.
- » Ensure the surface is dried completely once cleaned.
- » Absorbent materials, such as carpets, may need to be professionally cleaned or replaced if they are contaminated with mould.
- » If using a commercially available product, check the label to see how much to use and on which surfaces it can be used and always read and follow safety instructions.

To reduce the chance of mould regrowth, it is important to dry the area where the mould grew. The simplest way to dry a room is to open doors and windows to air the house thoroughly.





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