



## The Science Bit

Like bacteria, mould spores are present in the air and surfaces in our homes in generally harmless quantities, and only becomes visible if the environment allows significant growth. 'Black' mould is part of the fungus family and is a living organism. Appearing as a patch of small dark spots on any surface, this mould prefers pure condensed water, so it's a good indicator that the problem is likely to be condensation rather than other forms of dampness.

Other types of mould can also be a greenish colour, growing on cotton, wood, and paper products. Like black mould, it is also most commonly associated with pure condensed water or evaporated water from major flooding.

Because it's a fungus, general household cleaning products, especially bleach, may make it worse. Using a dedicated mould wash or spray is the most effective treatment.

### Other Costs of Black Mould in the Home

High humidity and mould can cause permanent damage to furniture, clothing, carpets and other soft furnishings. This is normally not covered by home contents insurance or the Council's compensation policy. Prevention is the best and cheapest cure!

### Health Effects of Damp and Mould

Just like bacteria, dust and general dirt, if left untreated, mould can cause harm to people who are allergic to moulds or in people who are exposed for a prolonged period. Common symptoms of exposure to mould include:

- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Itchy eyes, nose, or throat
- Nasal congestion



Just as importantly, living in a home with black mould can have a negative impact on many people's mental wellbeing. The health risks are reduced or eliminated as soon as mould is treated.



### Did You Know?

Although 60% of people in an independent survey said that they think black mould is a landlord responsibility, all Mid Devon Housing tenants are contractually responsible for reducing condensation and black mould in their homes.

## Mould Management Checklist

	Landlord Responsibilities	Tenant Responsibilities
	<input type="checkbox"/> Keeping extractor fans in repair <input type="checkbox"/> Fixing roof leaks <input type="checkbox"/> Fixing plumbing leaks <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining drainage <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that DPCs are not bridged <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping external walls in repair	<input type="checkbox"/> Opening windows daily (see cross-ventilation) <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid drying washing indoors, or follow advice <input type="checkbox"/> Covering pans when cooking <input type="checkbox"/> Wiping moisture as soon as it appears on surfaces <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping fans on & doors closed until moisture clears <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining internal humidity between 40 and 59% <input type="checkbox"/> Consider using a dehumidifier to help with high humidity
	<input type="checkbox"/> Keeping windows in repair <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping extractor fans in repair <input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring trickle vents, wall and sub floor vents are functional.	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid placing furniture along external walls <input type="checkbox"/> Keep window vents open <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-ventilate the home daily, for around 5-20mins <input type="checkbox"/> Leave an air gap of at least 3inches between furniture and walls. A bigger gap may be needed for external walls <input type="checkbox"/> Keep rooms, wardrobes and cupboards uncluttered
	<input type="checkbox"/> Keep heating in repair <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure loft spaces are evenly insulated, ideally to at least 270mm <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that filled wall cavities are clear and dry	<input type="checkbox"/> Use the heating provided <input type="checkbox"/> Try to balance the heating throughout the day and night, around 18°C-21°C during the day and no less than 15°C at night <input type="checkbox"/> Keep furniture away from walls to allow heat to reach the area behind
	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that properties are cleaned prior to letting <input type="checkbox"/> Treat any wet or dry rot	<input type="checkbox"/> Regular cleaning will remove things that moulds feed on <input type="checkbox"/> Consider storing items in plastic rather than cardboard boxes <input type="checkbox"/> Use a mould inhibitor when redecorating <input type="checkbox"/> Use a mould wash or spray as soon as mould appears - the more there is, the quicker it grows and the more damage it causes

### WHAT CAUSES BLACK MOULD?



Air-bourne moisture is the one consistent factor in the growth of black mould. Where indoor moisture (RH) exceeds 70% on a regular basis, black mould will form, even in a well-insulated home.



Mould typically grows on areas where condensation settles, typically the cooler areas of a home. It is also affected by air temperature, with warmer air being able to hold more moisture.



Mould thrives in stale air, where there are no regular air changes, such as behind furniture, in cluttered rooms or poorly ventilated areas. Regular cleaning, using fans and opening windows daily can help.



As a living organism, mould needs food. Dust, dirt, paper, cardboard, plaster, wood, leather, food, cellulose... anything organic can attract mould. Regular cleaning and smarter storage can remove some of these food sources.

# A Guide to a Damp, Mould & Condensation Free Home



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Although tailored to our tenants, this guide to damp, mould & condensation should provide useful information and tools to visiting officers, homeowners and stakeholders. This leaflet has been created in consultation with a group of MDH tenants who have experienced damp or mould in their homes.

### COST OF HEATING AND FUEL POVERTY.

With the ever rising cost of living, some people are finding that they are unable to afford to heat their homes effectively. This can contribute to the growth of black mould and damp.



Scan me to find out more!

TOP TIP - lots of people don't open windows because they worry that they are losing valuable heat. Strategic opening of windows lets stale moist air escape and allows clean dry air to enter your home. Clean fresh air can be easier to heat.

# Road Map to a Damp & Mould Free Home...

## Step 1 – Identify the most probable cause of the damp or mould



Penetrating damp (external) – for example roof or gutter leaks. It will start as a damp patch and water could start dripping through, normally starting between plasterboard joints. Black mould will not normally form on this type of damp. It often appears along the seams of plasterboard joints, only after rainy periods. Condensation can look like this – the easiest way to tell is whether the loft insulation is wet as well.



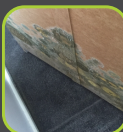
Dried penetrating damp (for example from roof leaks, gutter leaks or through damaged walls). After repair, or between period of rain, this type of damp will often dry as a brown stain on walls or ceilings. Intermittent plumbing leaks may also look like this. Black mould is not normally associated with this type of damp.



Penetrating damp (external), through a wall or door. In this example, driving rain has penetrated through the wall or door, leaving a damp patch and salt deposits. Due to these salts, black mould is not normally associated with this type of damp. If black mould is found in an area such as this, it is more likely to be due to condensation settling on the cooler surface.



Condensation black mould. In this example, a wardrobe pushed close against an external wall affected the temperature and ventilation of the area, allowing moist air to settle here and allow black mould to form in a classic crescent shape. It will often be accompanied by water droplets on windows, especially early in the morning in bedrooms. In extreme circumstances, water droplets may form on ceilings, looking like a roof leak, but the insulation above will be dry.



Moulds on furniture – this is also normally associated with high humidity and condensation, especially when found in areas without evidence of water leak or penetration. It can look very extreme, often because furniture and clothing (especially leather) are very good at absorbing moisture from the air. In this example, the wall and floor are both dry beyond the surface.



Rising damp – this is actually the least common type of damp in our homes and is often misdiagnosed. Rising damp occurs on the ground floor, characterised by a tide mark up to 1m above the ground. You will often see salts present on the surface. Due to these salts, black mould will not normally grow in these areas.

## The right tools for the job

As well as visual inspections, we also have a range of tools available to help us diagnose possible causes of damp, such as resistance meters, cavity scopes, hygro-thermal meters and salts analysis kits. Commonly called 'Damp Meters', resistance meters actually measure how easily electricity passes through a material – this can help tell us if a material is dry or if further investigation is needed.

## Step 4 – In some circumstances, we may be able to offer improvements to help prevent damp and mould.

- Installing extractor fans where there are none
- Upgrading fans to more effective types
- Installing air handling units
- Installing trickle vents to windows
- Increasing insulation to walls, cavities and/or roof spaces
- Upgrading heating to more efficient and consistent types.
- Applying a chemical DPC (damp proof course) to older buildings

## Step 5 – Don't forget!

Like day to day cleaning to keep on top of dirt and dust, preventing damp and mould isn't a one-off action. It requires ongoing effort, learning and actions from both you and us. People will always create moisture and buildings will always require maintenance.



## Step 3 – What can and should tenants be doing to prevent, reduce or resolve damp and mould?

- Wipe moisture from surfaces and windows as soon as it appears
- Treat mould with a fungicidal treatment as soon as it appears, dry clean affected clothing (avoid using bleach or general cleaning products) as these can spread mould further
- Keep a clutter-free home, and avoid over loading storage cupboards
- Avoid placing furniture against external walls, leaving a 3 inch air gap between furniture and internal walls.
- Avoid drying washing indoors. If you must – hang in the bathroom or kitchen with the fan on and door closed. Never dry on radiators.
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed during and after use, with fans on or windows open, cover pans when cooking.
- Open windows at either end of the home for around 5-20 minutes a day, every day (cross ventilation).
- Try to maintain a fairly consistent temperature, between 18°C and 21°C during the day and at least 15°C at night is recommended. Avoid using propane heaters as they produce moisture.
- Clean regularly
- Use a dehumidifier if needed
- Keep window and wall vents open

TOP TIP: If you open a window on the side of the home receiving the least wind wider than an open window on the opposite side, pressure will remove stale air from the home without feeling so draughty. This is called CROSS VENTILATION. Check out our handy video guide on cross ventilation on our website



## Step 2 – As your landlord, we should:

- Repair leaking roofing, chimney and guttering
- Repair plumbing leaks
- Repair or replace faulty extractor fans
- Make sure your windows open and close
- Provide and maintain heating
- Renew building components in accordance with legislation and the Decent Homes Standard.

## Where does the moisture come from? (pints)

Two people active for a day	□□□
Cooking and boiling a kettle	□□□□□□
One bath or shower	□□□
Washing clothes	□
Drying clothes	□□□□□□□□
Penetrating or rising damp	□



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