

# A GUIDE TO CONDENSATION, DAMP AND MOULD



# Contents

03

## Damp and mould in your home

04

## What is damp and mould?

04

## Types of damp

07

## Types of mould

08

## What can I do to minimise damp and mould?

11

## Reporting damp and mould in your home

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## Damp and mould in your home

We are committed to maintaining our homes to a high standard and to make sure our residents stay safe, healthy, and well in their homes. Damp and mould are issues which can have a serious impact on the health and well-being of our residents and cause damage to both your home and items stored within them. We want to work in partnership with our tenants to ensure our homes are safe and healthy. The Housing Act 2004 requires that our properties are free from hazards including damp, mould, and excess cold, and actions must be taken to reduce the risks.

# What is damp and mould?

Damp and mould are common issues in homes that can arise due to various reasons such as water leaks, poor ventilation, or excessive moisture leading to condensation. Damp encourages the growth of mould which can increase the risk of respiratory illness. Good ventilation helps remove moisture, you can also reduce moisture by keeping it contained and heating your home adequately. Damp is very common in UK homes and can cause all sorts of problems, including mould on walls and furniture or making timber window frames rot. Damp also encourages the growth of mould and mites which can be the source of many health problems, including respiratory infections, asthma and allergies.

## Types of damp

There are four main different types of damp which can occur depending on the underlying cause and conditions. It is important to understand the difference between them so that you can effectively treat the problem.

The following pages provide more details on the different types of damp

1

## Rising Damp

This is caused by water rising from the ground into your home. Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms and will normally rise no more than 12 – 24 inches above ground level. The water gets through or round a broken damp proof course (DPC) or passes through the natural brickwork if the property was built without a DPC. Rising damp usually leaves a tide mark low down on the wall and you may also notice white salts on the affected areas. Rising damp will be present all year round but is more noticeable in winter. If left untreated it may cause wall plaster to crumble and paper to lift in the affected area.



## 2 Penetrating Damp

This type of dampness will only be found on external walls or in the case of roof leaks, on ceilings. It only appears because of a defect outside the home, such as missing pointing to the brickwork, cracked rendering or missing roof tiles. These defects then allow water to pass from the outside to the inner surfaces. Penetrating damp normally appears as a well-defined 'damp patch' which is far more noticeable following a period of rainfall, it will look and feel damp to the touch.



3

## Damp caused by defective plumbing

Leaks from water and waste pipes, especially in bathrooms and kitchens, are relatively common. They can affect both external and internal walls and ceilings. The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch and remains damp whatever the weather conditions outside. A quick examination of the water and waste pipes serving the kitchen and bathroom and the seal around the bath, shower and sinks; plus the external pipework, will usually find the source of the problem.



4

## Condensation

Most homes will be affected by condensation at some point. However, certain activities can increase the problem. Cooking, washing, drying clothes indoors, even breathing - all produce water vapour. Condensation is caused when water vapour or moisture is created inside your home and comes into contact with colder surfaces, for example, a window, glazed tiles or a wall. The resulting water drops may then soak into the paintwork creating ideal conditions for black mould spores to form.

Condensation mainly occurs in the colder months regardless of whether it is wet or dry outside.

It is usually found in corners and north facing walls or in areas where there is little air circulation such as in built-in cupboards or behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls.

# Mould

Mould spores are invisible to the human eye and are always present in the atmosphere both inside and outside dwellings. They only become noticeable when they land on a surface upon which they can grow and then multiply. For mould to thrive and survive, it requires four elements:

1. **Moisture** - obtained from condensation
2. **Food** - such as wallpaper or emulsion paint
3. **Suitable temperature** - courtesy of the householder
4. **Oxygen** – through breathing!

## Types of mould

- **Black Mould** – typically black or dark green in colour, often slimy or powdery. Commonly found in area with prolonged water damage or high humidity, such as damp walls ceilings or behind furniture.
- **Green Mould**– Greenish is colour, powdery or fuzzy in texture, often grows on damp walls, wallpaper or damp fabrics.
- **White Mould** – appears as a white fuzzy growth commonly found on organic materials like wood, paper or textiles in damp environments.
- **Alternaria** – initially dark green or black, maturing to brown or grey in colour, this thrives in damp areas like showers, bathrooms and kitchens.



# What can I do to minimise damp and mould?

## 1 Ventilate

### Open windows

Without good air flow in your home, excess moisture may appear on your walls, windows and floors. Open windows for short periods of time to ventilate.

### Trickle vents

If your windows have trickle vents make sure you leave them open during the day. This allows moisture to escape.

### Air vents

Make sure air vents are not blocked and kept clean, as they allow for natural airflow and moisture to escape.

### Bathroom extractor fans

Use these when bathing or showering. Extractor fans are very cost effective to run. Baths and showers make a lot of humidity. Close the door and switch on the extractor fan or open a window until the moisture is cleared.

### De-clutter

Try to get rid of unnecessary items to clear space along the walls. If it is not possible to clear, then store items on a shelf. Good air flow is important to circulate the heat and helps push moisture out. This will help prevent "dead patches" where mould can form.

### Kitchen extractor fans

Use this when cooking in the kitchen. Keep extractor fan/heat ventilation isolator switches turned on as extra moisture will contribute to mould growth.

### Reduce moisture

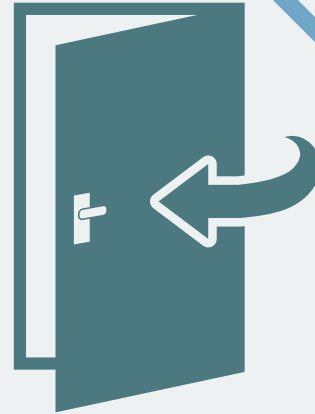
To speed up ventilation, wipe down your windows and surfaces with a clean cloth to remove excess moisture.



## 2 Contain Moisture

### Shut doors

When using the bathroom or kitchen, prevent moisture spreading to rest of the rooms in the house.



### Use lids

Use lids on pots when cooking as this helps reduce steam and moisture in the air.

### Dry clothes outside or use a clothes horse

If drying clothes inside, use a clothes horse either in a room with the door closed, a window open and heating on, or in the bathroom with extractor fan on and door closed.



### Top Tip!

if you don't have access to a garden to dry your clothes outside, using a dehumidifier is a cost effective way to help dry clothes inside and remove moisture from your home.

## 3 Heat your home adequately

### Heat your home adequately

Keep each room heated to above 16 °C, as cold rooms attract moisture and allow mould to grow.

### Keep radiators clear

Do not obstruct radiators or other heat emitters (storage heaters etc.), to allow heat to reach entire room.

### Keep a constant temperature

Avoid extreme changes in temperature (e.g. turning heat up to maximum and then turning heat off completely). Keep thermostat at a constant 16 – 21 °C.

## Top Tip!

**If you see it, clean it.**

By keeping on top of cleaning the affected surfaces, this will make a big impact on the growth and spread of mould. Products designed for cleaning areas effected by mould are widely available to purchase in most shops.

# Reporting Damp and Mould in your home

If you think you have an issue with damp and mould in your home please report it to us as soon as possible after noticing a problem. When we receive a report, an operative will attend your property to determine the cause and seek to resolve the immediate issue. In some cases they may need to further diagnose the problem. Where damp is a result of condensation we will work with you to take appropriate measures to prevent damp and mould occurring. You can report an issue by calling the number below.



0300 123 4000

## We value your feedback

We would love to hear your feedback on this guide to condensation, damp and mould. Please e mail us at [housinghealthandsafety@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:housinghealthandsafety@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk) with your thoughts.

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