

# Dealing with moisture and mould in your home

## Information for tenants

Moisture is produced in the home by breathing, body heat and by normal daily activities such as cooking, bathing and laundry.

The average person puts about four pints of water into the air every day. Mould in the home is most commonly caused when this moisture cannot escape because natural ventilation is blocked up or windows and extractor fans are not used. However, other causes are possible.

### Step 1: Find out where the moisture is coming from

#### Can you see signs of a leak or an internal 'tidemark'?

Moisture sometimes gets in through the walls or ceilings. Reasons include faulty roofs, guttering and brickwork, and leaks from properties above. Normally there are obvious signs, either on internal ceilings or on the external walls of the building.

Internal 'tidemarks' may be caused by a leak into the property. Report it to our maintenance service so they can investigate and do any repairs. You will need to dry out the damp using heating and ventilation, possibly over several weeks. We can help and advise on how to do this.

On much rarer occasions water can enter a building through the ground floor, affecting

the lower level walls. This may be caused by a breach of the damp proof course or a failure of the damp proof membrane.

#### What is condensation and what causes it?

The air around you contains tiny droplets of moisture. When warm, moist air meets cooler air or a cooler surface, the warm air droplets become visible. Examples of this include your breath in the air on a cold day or shower steam on a bathroom mirror.

Condensation is more noticeable on non-absorbent surfaces such as windows or tiles, but it can form on any surface and you may not realise until mould or rotting occurs. In Britain, condensation in houses is mainly a winter problem, with warm, moist air travelling from living areas to the colder parts of the building.

### Step 2: Deal with the condensation and mould that you already have

- Wipe down windows and window sills daily and dry the wet cloth in a well-ventilated area.
- Wipe down walls and window frames with diluted bleach or a fungicidal wash.
- Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.
- Use a vacuum cleaner, not a brush, on dry mould.

Mould should not reappear once you resolve the causes of condensation.



### Step 3: Don't let condensation form

Condensation is caused by moisture inside the property. Reduce the risk by reducing the amount of moisture that is produced indoors. Here are a few ways to do this:

- Don't use portable heaters. Each litre of gas puts a litre of water into the air. Your tenancy agreement states that you should not use this type of heater.
- When cooking, cover boiling pans, open windows or use an extractor fan to remove steam. Keep your kitchen door closed when cooking so steam can't spread around the property.
- Drying clothes put a lot of moisture into the air. Dry laundry outside whenever possible. If clothes must be dried indoors, keep the room ventilated at all times. Try drying them in the bathroom with the door closed and the fan on or window open. Alternatively, use a cool area of the premises – drying takes longer but there is less moisture in the air at any one time. Don't hang wet coats in living areas.
- If your tumble dryer is not a self-condensing type, make sure it vents outside.
- Just being in a room creates moisture in the air, so keep a small window slightly open to allow ventilation. If your windows have trickle vents, leave them open.
- Open windows wider when cooking, washing up, bathing or drying clothes.
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors shut when cooking or bathing to stop moisture getting to other, colder rooms.
- Check that extractor fans work correctly. Most fans monitor the moisture in the air and automatically come on when needed so don't switch them off from the isolator. Report faulty fans to the council immediately.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes and don't fill them too tightly.
- Leave space between furniture (especially beds and sofas) and the wall to allow air to circulate.
- Heat your home a little more. In cold weather, the best way to keep rooms warm enough to stop condensation is to keep some heating on all day on a low

thermostat setting, even if no-one is at home. This is very important in bedrooms, especially in flats and bungalows where they are not above a warm living room.

- A small heater with its own thermostat in each bedroom (not a bottled gas heater) helps to control heating and costs.
- Dehumidifiers can help to reduce condensation in warm rooms with a lot of moisture, but not in cold damp rooms.

### Step 4: Don't let mould appear

Redecorate using a good quality fungicidal or anti-condensation paint. Remember that these paints will not work if they are covered with ordinary paint or wallpaper.

The only lasting cure for severe mould is to get rid of the cause of the moisture.

**If you receive this leaflet, please follow the advice for four to six weeks and if you do not see any change please contact the maintenance service to arrange an inspection:**

- ☎ 01895 556600, 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
- @ HHS-HousingRepairs@hillington.gov.uk
- 🌐 [www.hillingdon.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/repairs)