

Housing People

Guide to Damp and Mould



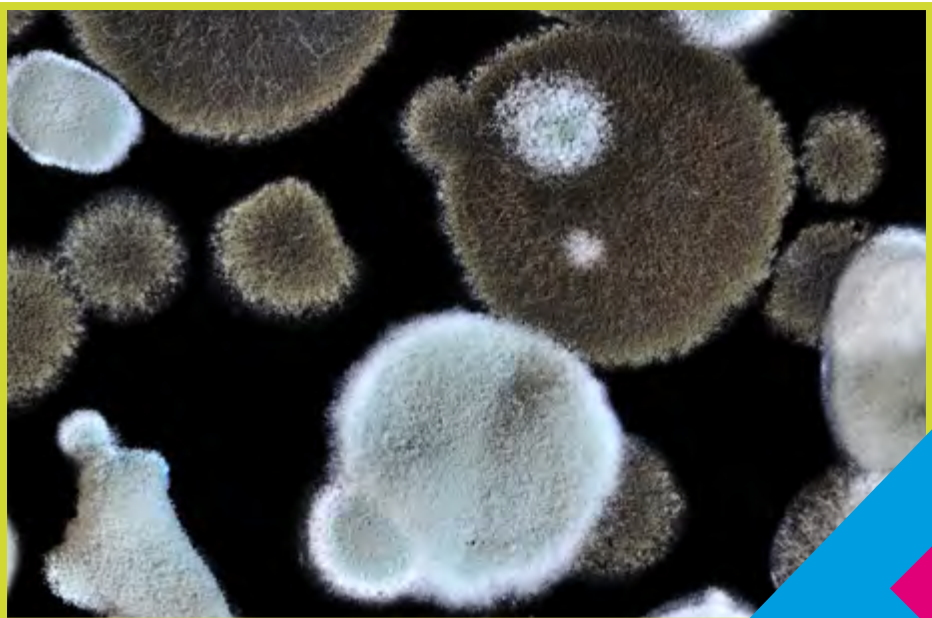
If you have follow the advice given within this guide and feel that your property is continuing to suffer from damp or condensation mould growth, please contact us on **01392 273462** or email **repairs@cornerstonehousing.net**

Damp and Mould

Damp is the effect of unwanted moisture, leading to the growth of Mould.

Moulds are minute fungal organisms, known as Spores, these spores are naturally occurring and are found everywhere from internal and external environments, and in and on people and plants. They are an essential part of the natural environment and play an important role in our ecological system by breaking down and digesting unwanted organic material.

However, too many mould spores can lead to unwanted consequences, such as physical damage to property or adverse health implications. Mould growth occurs when mould spores are able to germinate and grow on contact with damp surfaces.



Typical types of Damp & Mould found in our homes

Penetrating Damp:

This occurs if water (rainwater or otherwise) is coming in through a wall or roof, (for example under a loose roof tile) or through cracks. It can be identified by:-

- Discolouration of internal walls or ceilings.
- The presence of tidemarks or salt deposits.
- Blown or blistered plaster.
- Rusted nails in skirting boards and floor timbers.

Random damp patches to walls and ceilings (at any height) may appear and severe mould on internal walls and window frames may be present.





Condensation Damp

Condensation is probably the most common form of moisture in the home and is highly dependent on the levels of humidity, temperature, ventilation and permeability of materials (their texture and insulation value).

Condensation generally occurs in our homes when the internal humidity level increases, causing warm moist air, which then meets colder surfaces like a wall or window. The humid moist air is unable to retain the same amount of moisture and the water is then released onto the colder surface as condensation droplets. It will also occur in areas where the air is still, such as inside storage cupboards, in corners of rooms at low and high level and behind furniture placed against walls.

This can take two main forms:

- Surface condensation arising when the inner surface of the structure is cooler than the room air.
- Condensation inside the structure (interstitial) where vapour pressure forces water vapour through porous materials (e.g. walls), which then condenses when it reaches colder conditions within the structure.

The conditions that can increase the risk of condensation are:

- Inadequate ventilation e.g. natural opening windows and trickle / background vents and mechanical extraction in bathrooms and kitchens.
- Inadequate heating g. undersized boilers and radiators, draught stripping.

- Inadequate thermal insulation e.g. Missing or defective wall and loft insulation.
- High humidity e.g. presence of rising and penetrating damp
- Poor building design and construction – specific cold areas (bridging) which are integral with the building construction.

Conditions that can lead to condensation are:

- Poor ventilation – not opening windows, blocking up vents not turning on extract fans, not allowing air to circulate around furniture.
- Poor heating – not heating the house which can be a result of fuel poverty.
- Defective insulation – dislodged insulation in lofts.
- High humidity - not covering pans when cooking and drying laundry inside the house can contribute to this
- Overcrowding.

Mould is a natural organic compound that develops in damp conditions and will only grow on damp surfaces. This is often noticeable and present in situations where condensation damp is present.

Condensation usually happens during cold weather and appears on cold surfaces and places where there is little movement of air. For example in corners of rooms, on or near windows, in or behind furniture. If left untreated, mould will begin to grow.

You can identify if you have condensation in your home because you will see signs of droplets of water on windows and walls and the presence of black/green speckled mould growth, or grey/white fluffy mildew.

If condensation is not dealt with swiftly this can quickly allow mould and mildew to develop and grow.

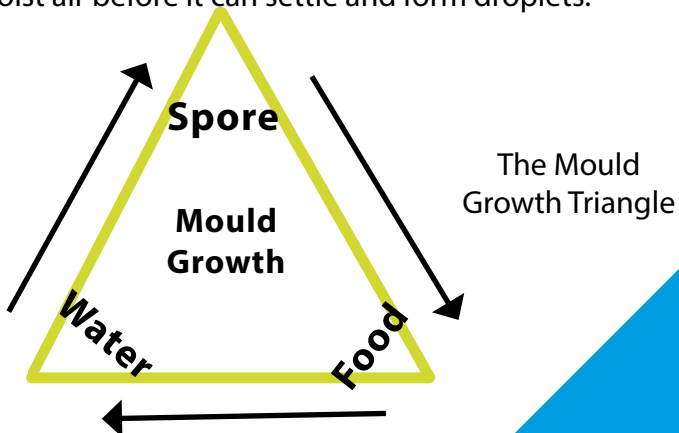
Conditions

Mould and mildew require water to grow and spread. If materials are dry mould will not grow. If you discover any wet or moist areas in your home, you should thoroughly dry them immediately and continue to keep the area dry. This also includes if your home has suffered from service pipe leak or a flood.

Both mould and mildew rely on moisture to grow. Typically, mildew grows best when exposed to 62 to 93 percent humidity levels and temperatures of 25-31 degrees, and mould grows best in environments that have 60 percent humidity or higher and in ALL temperatures.

You are most likely to find mildew forming on plants and organic materials, such as clothes, paper-based products, ceilings, walls, and floors. Mould grows on both live and dead organic material, including furniture, paint, paper and wood products, insulation, fabric and food.

Mould also requires poor air circulation to enable it to thrive, if the air in the home becomes stale and saturated through humidity the moisture droplets will migrate and condense on the nearest cold surface, however, if there is sufficient ventilation the air flow will disrupt the moist air before it can settle and form droplets.



Prevention

Ventilation is key when it comes to preventing condensation as this will help any moist air escape. As air circulates round the home, it is drawn outside through windows, doors, vents and extractor fans etc.

The way to prevent mould escalating is to remove it as soon as it is noticed by thoroughly cleaning and drying the area.

Condensation and mould can be prevented as much as possible by following some simple tips:

Open windows

Keep your home well ventilated by opening windows frequently. This will allow air to circulate. However, it is important not to over-ventilate your home by leaving windows open for long periods during cold weather. This will cause your walls to lose all of their stored heat and create cold spots. Use any trickle vents and do not block up air vents.

Keep windows free from moisture by wiping/cleaning them down regularly, remember to include the frames and window cills.

There are useful tools available to assist you such as window vacs.



Constant Temperature

Heating is also a key element in reducing condensation. This is because warm air can hold far more moisture than cold air. Sudden rises and drops in temperature can worsen a condensation problem. Having your heating on a constant low background heat can reduce the chances of damp forming better than frequently changing between hot and cold.

The temperature does not need to be hot, just warmer than the outside temperature. The constant heat will help evaporate the moisture in the air. Using your thermostat to set the temperature will ensure that your heating system only works when the temperature drops below the desired level.

Avoid putting the heating on for short periods of time as this will make the problem worse. The air absorbs water vapour more quickly than the walls warm up. When the heating is turned off, the air cools rapidly and condensation therefore increases and cools the walls further.

In principle you may use a little more energy initially as your home warms up but once it is sufficiently warmed up your energy use will reduce.

To help keep heat within the home and prevent it escaping the key is to ensure that all draughts are sealed, heating appliances are functioning properly, and insulation is improved wherever possible.



Cooking

When you are cooking, always turn extractor fans on as this will extract any excess moisture. It is also a good idea to open a window whilst cooking as well as shutting the door to stop steam entering other rooms and causing condensation.

Place lids on pans and do not over fill the kettle.



Baths and Showers

Make sure your extractor fan is on during and after you shower or take a bath. If you do not have a fan, then it is a good idea to open the bathroom window afterwards. Keep the bathroom door closed as this will stop the moisture from entering other parts of the home.

When having a bath, it is a good idea to run the cold water into the bath first to reduce the amount of steam produced.



Furniture

You should always leave a small gap between the walls and your furniture. This will allow the air to circulate around the room. Avoid over filling wardrobes, chest of drawers and cupboards, as this will allow the air to stagnate.

Avoid clutter.

Ensure you open and close curtains and blinds regularly.



Drying Washing

It is always best to avoid drying your washing indoors. However, we understand that this can be difficult, especially during the colder months, and we recognise that not all homes have, or can afford to use, tumble dryers. Although, it is always best to dry your clothes outside whenever possible.

If you do have a tumble dryer, make sure that this is vented properly.

When drying clothes indoors do not place items on radiators, this could lead to damage. Try drying them in one room only and keep the door shut and window open.

Dehumidifiers

These help draw moisture out of the air. They can be useful if you often dry your clothes inside the home. They can also be useful if you have a lot of people occupying the home or space.

As well as plug in dehumidifiers, there are various portable dehumidifiers/moisture absorbers that use a silica gel or other absorbent material to collect excess moisture. Remember to empty them frequently.



Things to Consider

If you have condensation mould anywhere in your home (including ceilings and walls) clean it away thoroughly as soon as you notice it, and try to think about how you could improve the environment by reducing moisture, improving ventilation or introducing more heat, to prevent it returning, consider if you could move furniture away from external walls, could you reduce clutter, could you take shorter showers/baths, do you need to report an extractor fan not working or do you need to open windows more frequently for short periods.

It is important that you report any damp or mould defects to us promptly and allow us access to your home to understand and rectify any problems.

In order to better understand what is happening environmental sensors may be used to monitor the air.

If you are unable to increase ventilation a mechanical system may need to be introduced, such as a PIV, Positive Input Ventilation system.

If you are unable to reduce the humidity/moisture in the air a dehumidifier may be required, for instance if you have a lot of occupants, if you have a home sauna or animal vivarium then a dehumidifier can help keep condensation under control.

To prevent air becoming stale and to avoid having to open windows for long periods you can consider using a fan for short periods on a low setting to gently keep the air moving around. Note: if the air is already cool due to not being heated the fan will feel cool initially, although it is not actually cooling the air.

Remember that house pets and plants produce moisture and can increase humidity too.

What happens when you report the issue to us

1

Our customer service team will complete an initial questionnaire assessment with you and request photographs of the issues you are reporting.

2

Our technical team will quickly assess this information and provide feedback or request that an appointment is made for a property surveyor to visit your home.

3

Our Property Services Surveyor will survey your property and will give you advice on what to do.

4

The survey will help us to identify where the root cause of the mould is, due to **condensation** or a **structural issue**.

Condensation

Structural

If we believe the issue to be structural, repairs will be made by our team to ensure the problem is dealt with.

Our staff members will advise you of ways to **fix this problem** or they may refer you to building work from our team if we believe there are problems with circulating air or essential maintenance in your property.