



The Science Bit

Like bacteria, mould spores are in the air and on surfaces of our homes all of the time in generally harmless amounts. The spores only become visible if they have enough 'food' and water. '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 sign that the problem is probably 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 usually linked with pure condensed water or evaporated water from major flooding. There is water in the air (lots of it) all of the time. If there wasn't, we wouldn't survive. So, it's not about getting rid of water or condensation, but managing it, so that it does not become a problem.

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

Too much water in the air 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
- 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, most tenants have some legal responsibility for reducing condensation and mould in homes. You're part of the solution!



Mould Management Checklist

Landlord Responsibilities



- ☐ Keeping extractor fans in good repair
- ☐ Fixing roof leaks
- ☐ Fixing plumbing leaks
- ☐ Maintaining drainage
- ☐ Ensure that damp proof coursing are not bridged
- ☐ Keeping external walls in repair



- ☐ Keeping windows in good repair
- ☐ Keeping extractor fans in good repair
- ☐ Ensuring trickle vents, wall and sub floor vents are functional



- ☐ Keep heating in good repair
- ☐ Ensure loft spaces are evenly insulated, ideally to at least 300mm
- ☐ Ensure that filled wall cavities are clear and dry



- ☐ Ensure that properties are cleaned prior to letting
- ☐ Treat any wet or dry rot

Tenant Responsibilities

- ☐ Opening windows daily (see cross-ventilation)
- ☐ Avoid drying washing indoors, or follow advice
- ☐ Covering pans when cooking
- ☐ Wiping moisture as soon as it appears on surfaces
- ☐ Keeping fans on & doors closed until moisture clears
- ☐ Maintaining internal humidity between 40 and 50%
- ☐ Consider using a dehumidifier to help with high humidity

- ☐ Avoid placing furniture along external walls
- ☐ Keep window vents open
- ☐ Cross-ventilate the home daily, for around 5-20mins
- ☐ Leave an air gap of at least 3 inches between furniture and walls. A bigger gap may be needed for external walls
- ☐ Keep rooms, wardrobes and cupboards uncluttered

- ☐ Use the heating provided
- ☐ 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
- ☐ Keep furniture away from walls to allow heat to reach the area behind
- ☐ Only open windows for short periods in Winter.

- ☐ Regular cleaning will remove things that moulds feed on
- ☐ Consider storing items in plastic rather than cardboard boxes
- ☐ Use a mould inhibitor when redecorating
- ☐ 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?



General Rule: Where there's MOULD it is COLD. Mould usually grows in cooler areas where condensation settles. Warmer air holds more moisture, so when it cools, the moisture settles, leading to mould growth.



Water in the air as a gas 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. This is because the water as a gas turns to a liquid when it hits cooler surfaces.



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.



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. A great way to measure ventilation levels is with a carbon dioxide monitor.

A Guide to a Damp and Mould Free Home

There is water around us all of the time, in liquid and in gas form. The air in our homes, and every building material contains some level of water. Without it, we couldn't survive. When it rises above normal levels, this is when it can become a problem. This guide sets out how this water can be managed to make sure that it does not cause damage to your health or your home. It's not easy, but we are in this together!



Safe Suffolk Renters

Safer Homes, Happier Tenants

Safe Suffolk Renters

Working Collaboratively in East & West Suffolk

safesuffolkrenters@eastsuffolk.gov.uk - www.safesuffolkrenters.org

Although tailored to tenants, this guide to damp, mould & condensation should provide useful information and tools to visiting officers, homeowners and stakeholders. This leaflet has been adapted and reproduced with agreement from Mid Devon Council in consultation with a group of tenants and employees 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.

If you're struggling with the cost of heating, we can put you in touch with the right people to ensure you are receiving all of the financial support available to you. If you're not sure how to get the best out of your heating system, visit our YouTube channel, @SafeSuffolkRenters, for advice.

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. Leaving windows open for too long in the winter can lead to too much cooling.

"Where there is MOULD, it is COLD"



Scan me to find out more!