

Important information about damp and mould for tenants and landlords in private housing



Milton Keynes
City Council

What causes mould?

Mould grows in damp conditions. It can be easy to spot the cause of mould. However, sometimes a specialist might need to investigate further.

What causes damp?

Dampness in your home can be caused by several things. For Example:

- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows
- Penetrating damp – usually rainwater coming in from the outside through leakage or seepage. This may be because of a missing roof tile, blocked gutters or penetration around window frames.
- Rising damp – Dampness from the ground rising up into the building fabric. This usually only affects the ground floor of buildings and may occur when the property has no damp-course, or the damp-course is defective

These causes of dampness usually leave a 'tidemark'.

If the dampness is not caused by anything mentioned above, then the likely cause is condensation.

What causes condensation?

Condensation is the most common form of damp. It happens when moist air meets a cold surface like a window or wall and tends to be worse in winter. Boiling water while cooking, showering, and drying clothes puts moisture in the air. It's important to balance these everyday activities by ventilating and heating your home properly.

Condensation does not leave a 'tidemark'. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. Look for it on external walls, in corners, near windows, behind wardrobes, inside cupboards, or places where there is little movement of air. Condensation can lead to mould growth if not removed quickly. By keeping condensation to a minimum, you can reduce the risk of dampness and mould in your home.

How to clean and treat mould growth?

A build-up of condensation in your home leads to damp, which can then lead to mould growth. To remove mould:

- Wipe mould off immediately with water using a sponge or cloth
- DO NOT disturb the mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning as this can increase the risk of respiratory problems
- Apply a diluted bleach solution to the wall or use a fungicidal wash/mould removal product available from DIY stores. (Read all instructions carefully before use and also wear rubber gloves)
- DO NOT use washing up liquid
- Dry clean clothes and shampoo carpets affected by mould
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould recurring. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper.
- DO NOT simply paint over mould. Properly clean/remove it first then use a special fungicidal paint to help prevent it recurring.
- The only lasting way of avoiding mould is to eliminate dampness!

Remember to seek assistance from your landlord where required, particularly if the dampness is caused by a property defect such as a leak.

How do I reduce condensation or stop it spreading?

- **Reduce moisture:**
 - Cover pots and pans when cooking
 - Dry clothes outdoors or use a vented tumble drier
 - Don't dry wet clothes on the radiator
- **Ventilation:**
 - Open windows or use trickle vents when it's not too cold (opening a bedroom window for 10 minutes when you get up can help)
 - Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom when in use by opening windows or using extractor fans
 - Close internal doors when you cook or shower
 - Avoid putting too many things in your cupboards or wardrobes as this stops air circulating
 - Leave a gap between furniture and external walls
 - Wipe excess condensation off windows and surfaces

- **Heating:**
 - Maintain a constant indoor temperature rather than cycling the heat on and off
 - Leave heating on for longer at a lower temperature rather than in short bursts
 - Keep rooms warm – at least 15 degrees Celsius.
- **Insulation:**
 - Check your loft insulation. The recommended thickness is 270mm.
 - Use thermal or lined curtains, keeping them open during the day and closed at night.

What if I have a persistent problem?

If you are unable to manage the condensation in your home, you should contact your landlord for support. If your landlord is unwilling to help, and if after following the advice contained in this information sheet for at least two weeks your house is still suffering from severe condensation, please contact the councils Private Sector Housing Team and arrangements will be made to visit your home.

Phone: 01908 252664

Email: privatesectorhousing@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Web: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/housing/private-sector-housing>

What action can landlords take to help prevent damp and mould in properties?

Landlords can take the following measures to prevent condensation, dampness and mould in their properties:

- **Respond swiftly to repair issues reported by your tenant:**
 - Landlords should seek to provide assistance to their tenants wherever possible. Acting swiftly to reports of disrepair can help to prevent damage to the property.
- **Ensure that the property is equipped with an adequate heating system:**
 - Your heating system should be capable of maintaining an indoor temperature of 21°C when the outside temperature is -1°C. If the heating system cannot achieve this or is too expensive to run it may require replacement.
- **Insulate your property:**
 - Ensure that the property has adequate loft insulation (recommended minimum thickness 270mm).
 - Consider cavity wall insulation.
 - Consider secondary or double glazing of windows to reduce heat loss and draughts.

- **Increase Ventilation:**
 - Consider installing trickle vents to existing windows.
 - Consider installing humidistat-controlled electric fans in kitchens and bathrooms. These come on automatically when the air becomes humid and are cheap to run.
- **Check your EPC:**
 - Properties with a high energy efficiency rating are less likely to experience dampness and mould. Check your EPC for areas where the energy efficiency of the property could be improved. The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) requires all properties in the private rented sector to have an energy performance rating of 'E' or above (or have a valid exemption).
- **Hire a Damp Expert to assess the property:**
 - Sometimes the cause of dampness is not obvious. A damp expert can help to identify the cause and recommend how to fix it.

Where can I get further advice/support?

You can get further information about condensation, dampness, and mould from the following organizations:

Shelter:

Phone: 0808 800 4444

Web: <https://england.shelter.org.uk/>

Citizens Advice:

Phone: 0800 144 8848

Web: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

Better Housing Better Health:

Phone: 0800 107 0044

Web: <https://www.bhbh.org.uk/>

Energy Saving Trust:

Web: <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/>

Help for Households:

Web: <https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/>