

Damp and mould

Information for private tenants



What is damp?

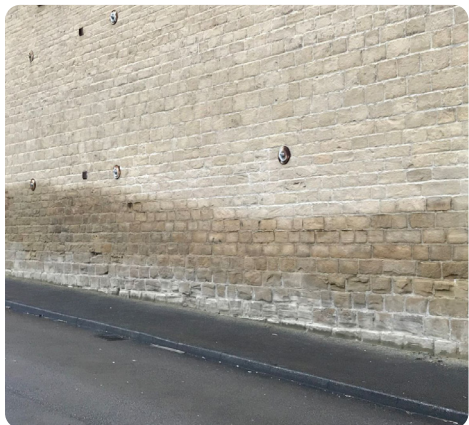
Damp is the build-up of moisture. As well as causing damage, some types of damp can lead to mould growth. Mould is a type of fungus that grows in moist conditions and can cause health problems. Damp can occur in homes for many reasons and affects both building materials (like walls, floors, ceilings, foundations) as well as fittings and furnishings (like carpets, curtains, wallpaper, furniture, clothing).

Types of damp



Condensation

Condensation is the most common form of damp. Condensation occurs when moisture or water vapour generated inside the home cools and condenses onto colder parts of the building. You will often notice condensation build up on windows, window frames and in the corner of rooms. Black mould is frequently seen as a result of this type of damp.



Rising damp

Rising damp is the name given to the process of water in the ground entering a property by travelling up through the pores in brickwork. It is usually caused by a broken or missing damp proof course - a horizontal membrane built into the walls of a house at low level. Rising damp only affects basements/ cellars and ground floor rooms. It will usually rise to between 30cm to 60 cm up the wall and leaves a brown 'tide' mark caused by salts from the ground. Black mould does not normally develop with rising damp because the salts prevent it growing.

Types of damp



Traumatic damp

Leaks from water and waste pipes in the home are fairly common, especially from bathrooms and kitchens.

Traumatic damp will occur all the time whatever the outside weather conditions, and could be coming from either your home or your neighbour's. You will see an area or patch of damp that feels and looks wet. You will not normally see black mould growth with traumatic damp because the chemicals in the water prevent it growing.



Penetrating damp

Penetrating damp is caused by water passing through the external walls or roof of a house because of a problem with the repair of the building, such as missing roof tiles, damaged pointing to brickwork, or cracked render. It is only found on external walls and sometimes on ceilings if there is damage to the roof. Penetrating damp is most noticeable after heavy rainfall or snow. You will see an area or patch of damp that feels and looks wet.

Mould

Mould spores like the damp environment caused by condensation. Mould spores become noticeable when they start to grow and multiply on surfaces. Mould appears as a cloud of little black dots. As well as being unsightly, it can cause health problems, so it is best to remove it as soon as it appears. Wipe off mould growth from walls and ceilings with a suitable mould remover. Make sure you always follow the product safety instructions.



Health risks

Most people come into contact with substances produced by damp and mould (for example, allergens, irritants, mould spores, toxins) by breathing them in.

This means that they mostly affect the airways and lungs.

Respiratory effects include:

- cough, wheeze and shortness of breath
- increased risk of airway infections
- development or worsening of allergic airway diseases or conditions that involve inflammation of the airways (for example, bronchitis, asthma, and COPD)

Other physical effects include:

- irritation of the eyes
- eczema, itchy skin or skin rashes
- fungal infections including but not exclusively, of the skin

If you are concerned about symptoms, speak with a healthcare professional.

Top tips for reducing condensation

Normal day-to-day activities like cooking, showering and even breathing can add to condensation in your home. Condensation can often lead to mould. Here are some top tips for reducing condensation in your home:

- when you notice condensation, wipe down affected surfaces with a dry cloth
- keep your curtains open during the day
- if you have them, use extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom, and clean them regularly
- try not to block air vents or trickle vents
- use lids on your pots and pans whilst cooking
- open windows after a bath or shower
- keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed to prevent moisture escaping into the rest of your home
- avoid drying washing on radiators
- if you dry washing indoors dry it on a clothes rack in the bathroom and open the window or put the extractor fan on and close the door
- if possible, move furniture away from walls, especially outside walls, and from radiators to allow air to circulate
- keep steam from kettles away from underneath cupboards
- keeping the heating on a low temperature (18 degrees) for longer periods will help to heat your home more evenly and efficiently than turning on heating in short, hot blasts
- open windows when using a tumble dryer and make sure they are vented correctly
- open windows for 5-10 minutes when getting up to let fresh air in and warm moisture out

Try not to overfill wardrobes, cupboards, or rooms as this will restrict air movement

Leave space between the back of items such as beds and sofas and walls, allowing air to circulate

Always make use of electrical extractor fans provided

If using tumble dryers make sure the room is adequately vented

Cook with pan lids on and turn head down once boiling

Clean and wipe moisture from windows when it appears

Keep the property at a constant warm temperature - not below 18 degrees centigrade

When cooking and bathing open windows

Wash off mould growth from walls and ceilings

Open windows and use the extractor fan provided

Try to put furniture against internal walls and not the external

Do not dry clothes on radiators

Close doors and open the windows to allow water vapour to escape the room

Always keep air ventilation ducts clean and clear of obstructions



Help and support

Private tenants

If you are a private tenant and have taken steps to deal with the damp and mould but it has not solved the problem, you should inform your landlord or managing agent and provide a reasonable timeframe to resolve the matter. If your landlord fails to deal with the issue, you can contact the property regulation team.

Email: propertyregulation@ealing.gov.uk

Phone: 020 8825 6622

Housing association tenants

If you are a housing association tenant, you should report issues with damp and mould to your housing association provider via their reporting process.

If you are dissatisfied with the service, please use your housing association's formal complaints process.

Owner occupiers

As owner of your property, if you are concerned about damp and mould; please contact a competent and reputable damp and mould specialist.

Leaseholders

Issues like penetrating damp or water leaks from the outside is usually the responsibility of the freeholder or management company but you should always check your lease and contact the responsible party. If you are dissatisfied with the freeholder or managing agent, please refer to the government [Leasehold Advisory Service](#)

Further help

If you need support to reduce your energy bills and energy consumption visit: <https://www.ealing.gov.uk/energyefficiency>

Other options for independent advice:

[Shelter - damp and mould: what tenants need to know](#)

[Citizens Advice - repairs - damp](#)

[National Energy Action \(NEA\) - dealing with damp and condensation](#)

[Energy bill help](#)