



Westmorland  
& Furness  
Council



# The Healthy Homes Guide to Damp and Mould

[healthyhomes.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](https://healthyhomes.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)



Funded by  
UK Government

POWERED BY

**LEVELLING  
— UP —**



Damp and mould are some of the biggest problems in rented homes. They cause serious health issues and mean expensive, complicated repairs if not resolved.

Finding the cause can be difficult. There are different types of damp that can cause mould, and there can be more than one affecting your home at once.

## Who is Responsible?

Damp and mould issues are everyone's problem. Tackling these issues as soon as possible protects tenant health, but also limits damage to the building.

If you're a tenant, you must tell your landlord about damp and mould problems as soon as you notice them. Do this in writing so you have a record, in case anything goes wrong. The quicker your landlord knows about them, the faster they will get sorted.

If you're a landlord, address these issues as soon as you can to protect your tenants and save money on repairing the property. Ensure your tenants know how to cut condensation, reducing the risk of damp and mould developing.

## Lifestyle Choices

Sometimes tenants are blamed for creating damp and mould problems through lifestyle choices. Washing, cooking, and other everyday activities are considered the sole reason for damp and mould. Condensation does not help, but it's unlikely to be the only cause. Anything that means moisture cannot leave the home leads to damp and mould. This might be disrepair, poor ventilation, inadequate heating, or energy efficiency problems.

Government guidance states that it is a **landlord's responsibility** to identify the cause and fix it.



# What Causes Condensation?

Indoors, when moist air finds a cooler surface, the moisture changes into droplets. It settles onto these surfaces as condensation.

Condensation problems happen when there's too much moisture in the air, where it cannot leave your home, or both. This leads to condensation damp, and then mould.

Exactly how much condensation stays in your home depends on three things:

- The amount of moisture produced indoors
- The temperatures in your home
- How well your home is ventilated

Condensation damp will be a problem until all three factors are in balance.

While turning up the heating can help, it won't usually fix condensation damp by itself. Improving ventilation, and curbing the moisture production will help solve condensation damp.

## Types of Damp

Alongside condensation damp, three other types can wreak havoc in your home. It's worth knowing that one or more types can affect your home at once. Ensure you rule out all the possible causes.

### Rising Damp

Rising damp is the rarest form of damp. It starts with a tide mark or damp patch near the floor, spreading upwards.

Moisture wicks up from the ground up into the walls, creating damp. Most post-Victorian buildings have a damp-proof course that prevents this.

If your home doesn't have a damp-proof course, or it is damaged, moisture can seep into the walls. Another cause of rising damp is when the ground level is higher than the damp-proof course.

If you suspect your home has rising damp, you should seek professional advice.

### Penetrating Damp

When water enters the building and causes damp inside, this is penetrating damp. Water enters through damaged structural elements, such as:

- The guttering
- The roof, including tiles, felt, chimneys, caps, pointing or flashing
- Render or cladding
- Windows or door frames
- Blocked air vents or bricks

Water can track across areas, so what seems to be the source might not be the cause at all. In any case, it's worth getting any structural issues fixed as soon as possible.

## Traumatic Damp

Leaks from pipes, baths, sinks, or faulty water storage are traumatic damp problems.

Water from outside can also count as traumatic damp. Environmental Protection handle water damage from floods and neighbouring buildings.

## When Does Damp Turn to Mould?

Once damp is a problem, mould is not far behind. Poor ventilation and extra moisture creates the perfect breeding ground for mould spores.

It's worth getting a hygrometer to keep an eye on moisture levels in your home. They measure room temperatures and humidity, and the highs and lows of both.

Humidity levels should average between 40% and 65% indoors. Expect humidity in kitchens and bathrooms to be a little higher than other rooms.

Mould spores multiply when relative humidity levels reach between 70% and 80%. Cooler temperatures (below 16°C) can also encourage mould growth.



# How to Prevent Damp and Mould

Unavoidable household tasks add moisture to your home. This includes cooking, cleaning, and drying clothes.

It's impossible to get rid of moisture altogether, and it wouldn't be healthy to try. But altering habits cuts down on condensation, reducing the risk of damp and mould.

Don't underestimate the difference you can make by making a few small changes. Drying clothes outdoors prevents creating 10 to 15 litres of moisture a week indoors.

## Wipe Away Condensation

Always wipe condensation off surfaces you can see, especially doors and windows. Opening doors and windows may not be enough by itself.

This prolongs the life of wooden doors and window frames, too.

## Create Less Moisture When Cooking

You can make a difference by putting lids on your pans to curb moisture.

Trapping the heat and moisture inside means you can turn down the heat to save energy. As an added bonus, food cooks quicker.

Otherwise, use the extractor or open a window to let moisture leave your home when you're cooking. Shut the kitchen door to stop the moisture from spreading to other rooms.

## Prevent Mould When Drying Clothes

When clothes dry inside, all the evaporated water stays in the room, unless it has a way to leave. This increases the risk of damp and mould.

Put your clothes through a spin cycle twice before putting them on an airer. This reduces the initial moisture.

If space allows, hang your clothes outside to dry. If drying clothes inside is a must, keep the clothes airer in the bathroom. Bathrooms are designed to handle higher levels of condensation than other rooms.

Take advantage of bathroom fans. Turn them on for a while to help clothes dry faster. Avoid putting wet clothes on radiators as this causes damp.

Keep the bathroom door shut while your clothes dry. This will stop moisture from spreading into other rooms.

## Let Damp Air Leave Your Home

Allow damp air to leave your home by improving ventilation. Opening your windows can make a big difference.

This doesn't have to be for long periods, as having them open for around ten minutes a day can help moist air to escape.

The best time to do this is at midday, when there is less moisture outside.

Dry air heats up quicker, so it may become a little cheaper to heat your home when you ventilate it regularly. If your windows have trickle vents, leave them open to let fresh air inside. Keep bathroom and kitchen windows slightly open to improve air circulation.

Any airbricks or vents in your home should remain open. Nothing should block them.

When bathing, turn on your bathroom fan. Keep the door shut to prevent moisture spreading to other rooms.

## Heating Your Home

If your home is not warm enough inside, moisture will remain. This contributes to damp and mould growth. Temperatures should be above 16°C at a minimum. The ideal temperature range is between 18°C and 21°C to ensure your home stays safe and warm. This also protects your own health, too.



## How to Treat Mould

It's important that you treat mould quickly. Health risks increase as the mould grows.

If mould spreads to more than one square meter, PPE equipment is needed for removal. Seek expert advice if this is the case.

Bleaching, sweeping or vacuuming are not effective methods of removing mould. Using bleach will eliminate some discoloration, but may not lift all the mould.

Brushing or vacuuming will release mould spores into the air, and can enter your lungs.

Remove mould when it is wet. Use a fungicidal wash on affected hard surfaces. These washes contain a Health and Safety Executive approval number.

Follow the instructions exactly to prevent regrowth and to protect yourself from the chemicals. Dispose of any rags or sponges you use.

Once the area is completely dry, paint over the area with fungicidal paint. Avoid painting over this with normal emulsion, as this will stop it from working.

Mould can grow on soft furnishings and furniture too. Dry clean mouldy clothes, and shampoo any affected carpets or rugs.

Furniture should not press against walls, as mould can grow on them. Move furniture about a foot away from walls to improve airflow.

## Grants Advice

We aim to improve homes in our area through central government grants.

We offer several schemes to make homes warmer and more efficient. This includes insulation, solar panels, and heat pumps.

To see if you're eligible for a grant, visit the website or contact the Housing retrofit team.



[better.homes@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:better.homes@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)



01768 212 348



[www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/housing/housing-energy-efficiency-grants-and-advice](http://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/housing/housing-energy-efficiency-grants-and-advice)

# Contact The Healthy Homes Team



No matter if you're a landlord, property manager, or tenant, damp and mould can be tricky.

The Healthy Homes team is here to help. If you have any questions, or you would like some advice, please don't hesitate to contact us.



[healthyhomes@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:healthyhomes@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)



[healthyhomes.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](http://healthyhomes.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)



01768 212428