

Tips to control mould

Whether you have spotted a small patch of mildew in the bathroom or large spots of mould on walls, getting rid of it should be your first priority.

Without a continuous flow of fresh air into and out of your home the relative humidity rises, and the internal atmosphere quickly becomes full of moisture. Eventually leading to condensation, especially with fluctuations in temperature which occur during winter. After a period of this cycle continuing, the water droplets that form on colder surfaces can lead to mould growth and, in some cases, damage to the building fabric itself.

Mould is a fungus that breaks down dead material. It grows in our homes because they offer the ideal conditions for it to grow – namely moisture, warm air, and materials to feed on, such as wood, carpet and dust.

It will continue to develop until it is cleaned and removed. However, dead spores can be just as harmful to our health, so it's important that you take care when getting rid of it.

The key to preventing mould is simple: **Moisture control**. Here are nine ways to curb moisture indoors, and the mould that thrives on it.

1. Dry clothes outside

Condensation is one of the biggest cause of mould problems in a home. Mould is a kind of fungus that develops from airborne spores. It prefers to grow in warm, damp conditions where there is not much airflow, and because of that, bathrooms and kitchens often suffer the worst from condensation and mould.

Drying washing on a **radiator** indoors creates condensation and also prevents your heating system from working efficiently. It is also a reason why condensation and mould growth is accelerated during the winter months, from one load of washing over 2 litres of

moisture is released into the air! If drying your washing outside isn't possible, dry in a room where it is possible to open a window to provide ventilation and remove the moisture from inside to outside.

Similarly, if you are using a washing machine or tumble dryer, ensure that it is vented correctly.

2. Open a window and close a door

After a shower, bath, boiling a kettle or cooking the humidity levels in your bathroom/kitchen increases considerably. If you don't already have an extractor fan or some form of ventilation fitted this humidity can turn into condensation and affect the whole house. Closing the door when using the bathroom or kitchen contains the moisture produced and opening a window after will allow any excess moisture to disperse naturally without affecting the temperature of the air in the rest of the house, therefore preventing condensation from settling on walls, ceilings and windows in your bathroom or kitchen, which can lead to mould problems. This will help **reduce the amount of condensation** that appears but it will not eliminate the problem.

Windows are also a key area to regularly check. If mould starts to grow around your windows, you know you have a problem. The mould may appear on your window sills and around the window frames. To avoid mould growing around your windows keep your property well-ventilated and check your window frames for any damage.

3. Control smoky atmospheres

Ban smoking indoors. Apart from all the serious side effects smoking causes, smoking drastically reduces the quality of the air in your home. This should be an all-year-round ban, not just in the winter. If your home has a fire or wood-burning stove, extra care should be taken to clean and maintain on a regular basis to remove

harmful soot and dust, and prevent soot and smoke from contaminating the air if they are not given proper ventilation.

Even burning candles can release smoke into the air you breathe.

4. Care for your pets

Bath your pets and wash their bedding regularly during winter. Pets also tend to spend more time indoors during winter months increasing the amount of **pet dander and fur** left indoors which can trigger allergic reactions. Restricting their access to downstairs rooms or only certain rooms in the house can also help reduce contamination.

5. Detox your home

Did you know that your home's indoor environment could be significantly more polluted and harmful than outdoors? Chemicals from household cleaners, hairsprays, spray-on deodorants, 'air-fresheners', and other chemicals leaves harmful particles in the air affecting the quality of air. Make the most of any opportunity to open your windows a crack and clear the air.

6. Do not overstuff

Do not overfill bedroom wardrobes and kitchen cupboards. Overfilled cupboards are a breeding ground for mould as it prevents the air from circulate freely inside.

For the same reasons, make sure that any furniture is at least 150mm away from the surrounding walls so that air can move around the property. Also, try to put wardrobes against **internal** walls in bedrooms; this will be less cold than external walls.

7. Get rid of dust mites

Household dust mites and their debris flourish in damp, mouldy conditions. Living in bedding, carpets and other soft

furnishings, **dust mites thrive in homes** that don't have adequate ventilation and where relative humidity is high. If you have had your pillow or duvet for over 2 years, 10% of its weight is made up of dust mites, dead mites and their droppings? When this detritus comes into contact with skin or is inhaled, it can cause allergic reactions, resulting in asthma attacks, eczema, watering eyes, itching, sneezing and a runny nose.

Reducing humidity levels considerably reduces the mites' ability to thrive. Bedding, cushions and carpets should be frequently cleaned or hoovered, and mattresses regularly turned over to help remove mites and their debris as well as dead skin cells and hair that provide them sustenance.

8. Regularly clean carpets

If you don't have hardwood floors, dust mites, dirt, hair and fungus can be living in your carpets. All of these can potentially aggravate breathing conditions such as asthma and bronchial attacks, as well as hay fever and eczema, and cause bad smells and a drop in the air quality in your home.

If you have a carpet in the bathroom or kitchen that regularly becomes wet from bathing and cooking, it's worth considering changing to a covering such as tiles or laminate, to eliminate the perfect breeding ground for dust mites, mould, fungi and other nasties. If you do want to stick with carpet, then it's important to make sure it is thoroughly cleaned regularly, and that you keep the space well-ventilated to keep relative humidity down.

9. Clean and kill mould

If mould has affected your home you need to act fast, stop it from spreading and kill the mould and address the damp. First, get a bin bag and throw away anything that has been badly affected by the mould, if the mould has reached any soft furnishings you should get these professionally dry cleaned. Next mix a bucket of water with a mould-removal product to make a solution you can clean your walls with.

There's a lot of different mould removal products on the market.

After washing your walls down, use a dry rag and try to soak up as much of the moisture as possible, a good tip is to try and leave your windows open so the room dries quickly and thoroughly. Finally, Hoover the room to ensure no moisture soaks into the floor.

Ventilation is the best solution

The best solution for condensation is proper ventilation, in order to vent condensation your home needs to have an adequate air flow and kept at a good temperature. When a room gets to a certain temperature, humidity gathers creating moisture in the air. If this excess moisture is not ventilated it will cause condensation.

So, use ventilation fans, open trickle vents or open windows slightly.

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