

# CONTROLLING MOULD IN YOUR HOUSE



*You can help control mould by keeping your home as dry as possible.*

## What is mould?

Mould is a type of fungus that grows in damp areas inside and outside the home. It usually appears as green, grey, brown, black, white or red growth or stains on walls, ceilings and other surfaces. It appears in speckled patches or streaks that become larger as it grows. Another name for mould is mildew.

## Why does mould need to be cleaned away when it starts to grow?

Small amounts of mould are common in most homes in New Zealand and usually don't cause any health concerns. However, when mould is left to grow in large quantities it can cause serious health problems. This is because mould releases thousands of very tiny or invisible spores (like tiny seeds) into the air. These spores can cause serious health issues when breathed in, especially for elderly people and infants, people with weak immune systems or people suffering from asthma or other respiratory problems.

Some mould produces highly poisonous spores which can be life threatening when breathed in, even in small amounts.

## What causes mould?

Mould needs moisture to live – it grows when there is dampness in or on a surface (such as walls, ceilings, floors, curtains or furniture) for a prolonged period of time. If there is a lot of mould in a home, it means there is too much moisture in the air, or there may be a

water leak or splashes that have not been dried. However, the most common cause of excess moisture is condensation. Condensation is dampness on walls, ceilings, floors, windows or window sills. It happens when wet, warm air such as cooking or bathroom steam (or even the warm air from your breathing), touches cold surfaces. This causes water to form.

## How can you stop mould growing?

The most important thing is to reduce moisture in your home. This will help stop mould growing. There are lots of ways you can reduce moisture:

### Reduce condensation

Wipe condensation that occurs off windows and walls. Don't leave damp towels on the window sill to dry. Open a few windows slightly throughout the house for 1-2 hours a day when you're home so air can circulate. On sunny days, open windows and doors for longer to let in plenty of fresh air. When showering, open a window in the bathroom a little or use an extractor fan. While someone is home, leave the window open for a while after your shower to let steam and condensation clear.

### Heating

Portable gas heaters create a lot of moisture in the home. Always open windows slightly when using them, or use a dry source of heat such as an electric heater or wood burner.

## Talk to us on 0800 801 601

If you would like more details about any information in this fact sheet, or have any queries about Housing New Zealand, please call our Customer Services Centre free, any time on **0800 801 601**, or visit our website [www.hnzc.co.nz](http://www.hnzc.co.nz)

If you have a hearing impairment, you can contact us using the NZ Relay Service on [www.nzrelay.co.nz](http://www.nzrelay.co.nz), or you can fax 0800 201 202.

## Washing

Hang washing outside to dry. If using a clothes drier, ensure it vents outside or that a window is kept open in the room the drier is in with the door to the rest of the house shut.

## Cooking

Keep lids on pots when cooking and let steam out by opening a window. You should also use an extractor fan if you have one.

## Splashes

Try and avoid splashing water in the kitchen, bathroom and laundry. If water does splash onto surfaces, dry the area with a cloth or towel. Keep shower curtains hanging inside the shower or bath so that water doesn't drip on to the floor. And wash the shower curtain every few weeks to stop mould growing.

## Leaks

Call us on 0800 801 601 about any leaks around your home so that they can be fixed. Check your home on the outside as well – look for leaky gutters, downpipes, taps or drains.

A common sign of a leak can be a pool of water forming underneath the house that never dries out.

## Other things you can do

To keep your house warmer and drier, open curtains to let sunlight in through the day and then close them at night to keep the warm air in. Open wardrobes occasionally to air them out. And dry any wet clothes or shoes outside before putting them into a wardrobe. Keep beds and furniture pulled slightly away from walls (especially external walls) so air can circulate. Use draught-stops under external doors in winter.

## Cleaning away mould

White vinegar is the best way to kill or clean mould. Note it has a bleaching effect so don't use it on surfaces that might discolour. Spray directly onto the mould using a spray bottle or wipe it on using a clean cloth. If necessary, use an old toothbrush to get in to corners. On painted surfaces, thin down the vinegar half and half with water to avoid damaging the paint. Leave it for a few days to take effect and then wipe off the dead mould with soap and water using a clean cloth. Remember to clean the cloth or throw it away when finished so that the spores don't spread.

Call us on 0800 801 601 if your home continues to suffer from persistent or severe mould. It's important that you clean away mould and try to reduce moisture in your home, but an ongoing mould issue may be a sign of another problem with the property. Reducing excess moisture in your home will help stop mould growing.



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