

Landlords often have repair bills as a result of damage caused by condensation and mould.

In most cases tenants will have caused the problem. However, if it is hard to manage the condensation in the property your tenants are unlikely to stay too long, and you may not always be able to recover the full cost of damage from the tenant when they go.

Therefore to make your property an attractive long term home, and minimise your maintenance costs we strongly advise that you take steps to make it easy to manage any condensation in the property.

What are the causes - Mould

Most cases of mould in domestic properties are caused by moisture. It will usually appear as black growth in crevices, corners and around the edges of fittings, such as baths, windows, cupboards etc., but can appear anywhere

By far the most common cause of mould growth is condensation within the property.

What are the causes - Condensation

Over the years in our efforts to have warmer homes and reduce energy wastage we have progressively restricted the movement of air between the inside of our homes and outside. This means any moisture produced in the home tends to stay there.

This moisture is converted into liquid (condenses) when this moist air touches a surface which is relatively cold eg:

- a window
- a corner furthest away from a radiator
- anywhere with cooler air than the rest of the room.

These tend to be the areas where the black mould appears. Mould won't grow without this moisture.

Seriously? How much moisture can we really produce?

Well, quite a lot actually. We put the following moisture into the air:

- **One person's breathing** – 0.5-1.0 litre over 24 hours
- Cooking – 0.5 litre for each hour
- Shower – 0.25 litre for 5 minutes. 1 bath – up to 1 litre.
- Clothes washing and drying – 2 litres for every load of washing.

This all goes into the air and stays in the house unless it is removed.

This obviously increases when there are more people, people are there longer (eg at home with children rather than out), or clothes are dried indoors, or extractor fans are not used when cooking, or doors are left open when showering and even if people exercise in the house,

substantially increasing their breathing rate and adding their sweat to the moisture in the property.

What can I do to reduce the problem?

Ensure the property can be well ventilated. Therefore:

- Fit a high powered extractor fan in the bathroom with a humidistat (ie the fan runs as long as there is humidity)
- Fit an extractor fan over the kitchen hob – this needs to extract to outside the property, not just filter and recirculate the air
- Ensure windows have trickle vents, or can be locked and secure when open slightly

Have good central heating to avoid cold spots. Properties with storage heaters usually have a mould problem.

Reduce the chance of water getting where it shouldn't.

- Ensure all seals around baths, showers and sinks are in good condition. Water creeping through a gap adds to the moisture in the house
- Ensure floor coverings in kitchens and bathrooms have no holes, so any spillage can be dried completely.

What should the tenants do?

We provide a fact sheet to all tenants when they move in explaining how they should

- Reduce the moisture produced, e.g. not drying clothes inside, keeping lids on pans when boiling.
- Remove any moisture, e.g. ventilate, use extractors, mop up any evident moisture
- Clean any signs of mould to kill it early

We also monitor this on property inspections and send reminders if we see a problem developing.

We can arrange for damp specialists to assess your property and have close relationships with the local Environmental Health Department to ensure we keep our advice up to date.