

Mould in your home

Now what?

Mould is a common problem in homes but it doesn't have to be! To help you, our tenants, we have compiled a fact sheet to help you combat this unsightly issue and to beat it once and for all. Given mould damages paintwork in the majority of cases, it's up to you as tenants to everything you can to make sure permanent damage isn't caused & your Bond put in jeopardy. More importantly, if left untreated, can be a serious risk to your health and well being.

What causes mould?

Condensation arises because warm air can hold more moisture than cold air. For example air at 25 degrees Celsius can hold about 20 grams of water per kilogram of air. This is its maximum water content so it corresponds to 100% humidity. If air in this area is cooled to 15 deg Celsius then its maximum water content falls to about half this value and about 10 grams of water must condense out of each kilogram of air. This will occur as a fog of liquid droplets if the air is cooled as mass or as condensation on a surface if that surface provides local cooling of the air around it.

The presence of condensation can be reduced if temperatures are increased. So turning on a heater in the morning can reduce the levels of condensation. If condensation has formed and settles on walls and windows this can create the basis for mould to grow. Mould growth is common in most rooms except the kitchen and hallway. Mould is particularly evident behind furniture such as beds and couches; this is due to lack of ventilation and air circulation.

FACT Typical quantities of water vapour produced in the home are (in litres per hour): Adult breathing 0.1, Hot bath 1.5, Washing machine 3.0, Clothes drier 5.0 and Shower 10.0. Many domestic and industrial appliances such as gas, oil and kerosene fired stoves, burners and heaters produce large quantities of water as a product of combustion. This problem does not arise with appliances that have a flue.

The dilution of moisture in the home will also assist to reduce condensation. Normally this process is achieved through high wall vents, which continually encourage cool outside air to displace warm moisture laden air at the ceiling level.

What does mould look like?

Mildew is a thin, often whitish to bluish-green growth produced by moulds on many surfaces. Moulds are simple plants belonging to the group known as fungi. Though moulds are always present in the air, those that cause mildew only need moisture and a certain temperature in order to grow. Moulds flourish in areas that are damp, warm, poorly lighted or where air is not circulated correctly.

They also grow on draperies, rugs and shower curtains -- anything from which they can get enough food. This includes cellulose products such as cotton, linen, wood, paper and protein substances such as silk, leather and wool.

In addition to an unpleasant musty odour, moulds and mildew cause considerable damage if permitted to grow. They discolour fabrics and sometimes eat into them until the fabrics rot and fall apart. Leather, paper and wood also become discoloured and are eventually damaged by mould and mildew. Prevention is the best mildew policy.

If things are kept clean, well-ventilated and dry, your chances of having mildew are greatly lessened.

What can i do to prevent this?

Step 1 - Remove the source of moisture

Mould will only grow in damp unventilated rooms. Are you opening windows when you shower or use your dryer? Are you drying wet clothes inside? Are all your exhaust fans working? Is there a possibility of a leak at the property? Do you open windows to allow some air flow through the property? If all of these possibilities have been ruled out then contact your Property Manager to discuss further.

Step 2 - Remove the mould

If mould is growing it will be necessary to remove this in the short term. You can do this by washing all clothing, bedding and other soft fabric articles such as soft toys on a hot cycle. Wash all clothes used for cleaning up separately to other clothes.

Other contaminated soft furnishings that cannot be put in a washing machine will have to be cleaned professionally. If this is not possible they may need to be thrown out.

Thoroughly clean all affected hard surfaces. In many cases household detergent can do the job if used correctly. Check the product's label to see how much to use and on which surfaces they can be used. Bleach & Exit Mould are good commercial cleaners (be careful of discoloring items with cleaning products and use as label recommends).

Apply cleaner and give it time to work before you mop or sponge it up. After cleaning a room or item, go over it again with a disinfectant to kill the germs and to remove any smells.

Do not mix detergents with bleaches, together in the same bucket, as this may release hazardous fumes.

Step 3 - Prevent mould regrowth

Mould sometimes grows back after cleaning. To minimise this, it is important to dry the area where the mould was or is growing. Keep exhaust fans on for as long as possible especially in the bathroom. **Other ways are to dry a room by opening doors and windows to thoroughly air the house or heat the house mould cannot grow without moisture so ensuring ventilation is of the utmost importance.**

For more information

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/downloads/mould_growth.pdf