



Mould and Condensation – important information from Housing ACT

Mould and Condensation

Canberra Winters are notoriously cold, resulting in issues with condensation and mould growth within our homes. Condensation and mould will occur in any type of construction if left untreated and allowed to grow. Condensation and mould do not discriminate between brick veneer, solid brick, and masonry veneer or monocrete type dwellings. The secret to the alleviation is early detection, prevention of condensation and mould before the issue gets out of hand.

What is Mould?

Mould is a type of fungi which belongs to a group of organisms including mushrooms and yeasts. To allow mould spores to grow and reproduce a food source (dust, dirt or organic matter) moisture is required.

Mould can be black, grey, green or white in colour. Mould often looks like a stain or smudge, and may smell musty.

Moulds are present virtually everywhere, indoors and outdoors and can grow in and on materials such as food, furniture, fabrics, carpets, walls, paper, timber and plumbing. Mould can also grow around the exterior of the home in decaying leaves, stale damp soil and compost.

Mould will grow in homes when it is provided with the right conditions to live in. For example in areas where cold, darkness and dampness are constantly present and the area is poorly ventilated or heating is not adequate. This can become evident in bathrooms or kitchens where extraction fans are not regularly used to extract moisture produced by showers or when cooking.

Ways to prevent mould:

- Ensure clothes and shoes are dry before storing them away
- Wipe away and dry areas affected by condensation e.g. windows and walls
- Ensure ventilation is adequate throughout the home, open windows and leave a small gap where possible
- Clean the wet areas of the home regularly



- Ensure steam is extracted from the bathroom while showering or bathing by opening a window and using an exhaust fan
- Ensure steam is extracted when cooking by opening a window or using the exhaust fan
- Let the sun into the home by opening curtains
- Dispose of any wet, musty smelling items
- If a water spill occurs it is important to dry the area quickly, preferably within 24-48 hours after the spill
- Do not stack items up against walls mould will not grow if dry air is circulating throughout the room

Ways to eradicate mould:

- Eradicate mould as soon as it occurs as it is much harder to remove if left to grow
- Do not dry brush the area as this may release mould spores into the air which can spread throughout the property.
- Areas infested with mould should be washed down with a solution of 20% water and 80% white vinegar (best used from a spray bottle)
- Avoid using bleach as it has a high pH which is ineffective in killing mould (bleach only whitens the mould spores instead of killing them)
- All surfaces should be wiped down with the mould remover and a clean cloth
- The cloth should be changed frequently to prevent spreading of mould spores - any cloths used should be placed in a plastic bag and disposed of to prevent spreading of mould spores
- The use of a dirty cloth may spread the infestation rather than remove it
- Repeating this treatment will help prevent mould re-growth

If after following the suggested prevention and cleaning processes mould continues to occur please report these issues to the Maintenance Call Centre on 62071500.

What is Condensation?

When water vapour is present in the air, it travels throughout the house and may come in contact with cooler surfaces and condense. Common places for condensation to occur are windows, un-insulated exterior walls and bedrooms. Corners of rooms where air movement is less and the air is cooler tend to also be prone to condensation.



Atmosphere heavily laden with water vapour is referred to as being of high humidity. When highly humidified air comes in contact with any cold surfaces such as a wall or ceiling, it cools down, water vapour is extracted from the air and remains in the form of condensation on the cold surfaces.

Condensation would not occur if humid, moist air could be removed and replaced by drier air. This can be achieved, usually very simply, by better ventilation of the home.

Indoor condensation can cause damage to fabrics, discolour paint and wallpaper but, more importantly, it promotes conditions suitable for the growth of mould.

Ways of improving ventilation and reducing condensation:

- Open Windows and doors wherever possible
- Use extractor fans so steam can escape when cooking, using the shower or bath and using the clothes dryer.
- Wipe condensation off walls and windows when it occurs
- Hang washing outside
- If water leaks or spills occur indoors it is important to clean and dry the area immediately or preferably within 24-48 hours to prevent mould from growing.
- The home should be ventilated each day by opening windows and doors where possible
- Exhaust fans should be kept clear and cleaned regularly.

Tenants should be aware that repairs will be at their own cost if Housing ACT or the Total Facilities Manager finds that mould in the property has resulted from tenant activity which may include but is not limited to the following:

- A humidifier in use;
- A kerosene heater in use;
- The exhaust fans are blocked;
- Moisture occurring due to lack of maintenance the tenant is responsible for; or
- Damp items being left in living rooms by the tenant

In Summary:

Taking a common sense approach to mould and condensation issues in your home will assist in making the home a safe and healthy environment to live in.



Further Information

For more information, contact your Housing Manager or telephone the Community Services Directorate on 133 427.

For more assistance on Housing ACT matters, please telephone 133 427.

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