

HOUSING TASMANIA FACT SHEET

Dealing with Damp, Condensation and Mould in Your Home

Tasmanian winters are sometimes cold and severe resulting in problems with condensation and mould growth in your home. Condensation and mould can occur on any surface, looks unpleasant and can increase the risk of respiratory illness. Mould is usually black but can be other colours including greens, yellows, pink grey or white.

Ensuring your home is free of mould and mildew is your responsibility as a public housing tenant.

What is condensation?

Condensation starts as moisture in the air, usually produced by cooking, washing, or drying clothes indoors. When moist air comes in contact with cool surfaces such as mirrors, walls, wall tiles and windows it condenses and forms water droplets.

In general you and your activities in your home cause the moisture/condensation. In a day you produce:

- Breathing (asleep) 0.30 Litre (per person) so if 3 people sleep in a room together that is nearly 1 litre per night.
- Breathing (awake) 0.85 Litre (per person)
- Cooking 3 Litres
- Shower, bath 1.0 Litre
- Drying Clothes 5.5 Litres.

The moist air rises when it is warm and often ends up on ceilings, walls and behind free standing furniture such as wardrobes and if the surfaces are not dried and aired regularly mould growth will occur.

A simple test to prove the condensation of indoor humidified air is to take a bottle of any liquid from your refrigerator and wipe it perfectly dry. Stand the bottle on the table in a short while condensation will form on the bottle. This condensation did not come through the wall of the bottle. It was removed from the air.





Why is it a problem?

Left untreated, condensation can result in mould growth on walls, ceiling, furniture, furnishings, and clothing in cupboards and drawers. High humidity has a cumulative effect in absorbent materials, such as clothing hanging in wardrobes or bed clothes making them damp. If these items are not dried, mould will develop. It can also affect plaster and cause woodwork to rot.

How do I prevent mould and condensation?

A dry, well-aired home is easier to heat and healthier for you and your family. You can minimise the amount of moisture and condensation in your home by doing the following things:

- open doors and windows as often as possible when you are at home;
- open windows or use extractor fans so steam can escape when:
 - cooking
 - using the shower or bath
 - using a clothes dryer
- wipe condensation off walls and windows when it occurs
- hang washing outside to dry
- maintain low background heat when the weather is cold or wet
- make sure clothes and shoes are dry before putting them away into storage area
- 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
- Also, you must not use unflued bottled gas heaters – these produce a lot of moisture and they are also a health and safety risk

Mould cannot grow if dry air is circulating so it may be necessary to move free standing wardrobes and beds away from the wall to allow ventilation.

Stacking goods against outside walls should also be avoided particularly on walls that do not face the sun.

How can I remove mould or mildew?

There are several products that can be used to kill mould.

Tea tree oil - mix in ratio of 1 tea spoon oil to 1 cup water in a spray bottle shake to blend. Spray on problem areas but do not rinse. This can be stored indefinitely.

Grapefruit Seed Extract – 10 drops to 1 cup water in a spray bottle, Spray on problem areas and do not rinse. This can be stored indefinitely. The advantage of this spray is that it is odourless.



Vinegar Spray- Straight white vinegar into a spray bottle and spray on problem areas allow to set without rinsing. The smell will dissipate in a few hours. Do not rinse.

Household diluted bleach (one part bleach three parts water mixed together)

These products should be applied as soon as mould appears; as it's harder to remove once it's been there a while. Open windows to improve airflow while you clean, particularly if using bleach as fumes can be toxic if you do not ventilate as you clean. Be sure you do not scrub too hard and remove any paint or varnish. Always read and follow the safety messages on household cleaning products bottles before using and wear rubber gloves when handling bleach or similar products.

Supermarkets also sell products that assist to absorb excess moisture in a room. These products are relatively inexpensive and consist of a small container of moisture absorbing beads or similar and can last for several weeks. Note that these products will not remove mould, but they may help to stop the mould coming back by absorbing excess moisture.

More information

If you would like further information about your responsibilities as a public housing tenant, please refer to your Lease or contact your local Housing Tasmania Area office.

For maintenance issues, contact Housing Tasmania's Statewide Maintenance Services on 1300 665 663.