

East Herts Council

Damp and Mould Checklist

September 2023



Introduction

If you rent or own your home and you are experiencing damp and mould, you should follow the guidance below to help reduce the issue.

If you rent your home, before contacting the council, you should speak to and write to your landlord to try to resolve the issue. If your landlord does not agree to do the repairs, you can contact the council with details of the problem.

1. Produce less moisture

- ☐ Keep the kitchen door shut and leave the windows open and/or extractor fan on when cooking.
- ☐ Ensure all washing is hung outside if possible. Avoid drying it on radiators. If you need to dry clothes indoors, open the window and close the door of the room where the clothes are drying, so that moisture can escape outside rather than circulate around your home.
- ☐ Ensure your home is not overcrowded. More people and pets living in your home means there will be more moisture produced.

2. Remove excess moisture

- ☐ Dry your windows and windowsills every morning as well as surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom that have become wet.
- ☐ Open the bathroom window and/or keep the extractor fan on when taking a shower or bath.
- ☐ Keep trickle vents in windows open. They are designed to ventilate your accommodation without causing draughts.
- ☐ Open the bedroom windows (for up to 20 minutes) in the morning and throw back the sheets or duvet to air the bed and bedding. A window slightly open is as good as one fully open. (Remember to close your windows for security when you go out).
- ☐ Consider the using dehumidifiers. They are great for drying clothes and generally keeping humidity under control, especially in flats or smaller properties.

3. Heat your home

- ☐ Having a medium-to-low level of heat throughout the house by keeping the heating on at low all day in cold weather will help to control condensation. Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. It will cost more initially to warm the walls, but when the walls are dry your heating bills will reduce.
- ☐ Do not put your heating on for short periods of time (one hour or less) – this will make the problem worse. The air will absorb moisture quicker than the walls can warm up.
- ☐ When the heating is turned off the air will cool quickly and condensation will be formed, cooling the walls further.
- ☐ Try to keep your home properly heated. It usually helps to have a low background temperature of at least 15 degrees in all rooms.

4. Remove mould growth

- ☐ Mould growth should be removed as soon as you see it.
- ☐ Where there is mould, wipe down or spray walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash that carries a HSE 'approval number' or a weak water and bleach solution.

Important notes relating to the use of bleach or fungicidal wash

- You should follow any safety instructions accompanying either the fungicidal wash or bleach.
 - Bleach can be dangerous, so you only need to use a weak solution.
 - You should ensure you are wearing appropriate gloves and eye protection and any nearby furniture and/or carpets are protected.
 - Chemicals should be kept away from children and animals.
- ☐ Do not remove mould by using a brush or vacuum cleaner as this may disturb the mould spores and can increase the risk of breathing problems.

5. Ventilate your home

- ❑ Make sure you are 'cross-ventilating' your home – opening a small window downstairs and a small one upstairs (they should ideally be on opposite sides of the house or diagonally opposite if you live in a flat). At the same time, open the interior room doors, this will allow drier air to circulate throughout your home. This cross-ventilation should be carried out for about 30 minutes each day.
- ❑ Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom for about 20 minutes after use by opening a small top window. Use an extractor fan if possible.
- ❑ Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls, and where possible place wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.
- ❑ Do not over-ventilate your accommodation by leaving the windows open as your walls will lose all the heat stored in them. Only open the windows for a short period at a time so that any moisture is able to escape. Then close your windows, leaving a small gap of about 5mm. It is advised to open the window slightly anytime that condensation is forming on the glass.

6. Damp and mould in older properties

- ❑ Historic buildings were designed to breathe and solutions for damp in modern buildings may not work on building of traditional construction. Advice should be sought from an RICS accredited surveyor (www.ricsfirms.com/) before undertaking damp treatment works in historic buildings.
- ❑ If your building is designated as a 'Listed Building' you may need listed building consent in order to make changes, and advice should be sought from our Planning Department prior to undertaking works. Further information can be found on our website: www.eastherts.gov.uk/planning-and-building/listed-buildings