

What is mould?



We mean mould caused by condensation. After it starts off as tiny water droplets, condensation turns to dark-coloured spores (commonly called "mould"). These droplets are created when excess moisture in the air comes into contact with a cold surface, e.g. windows, walls (especially exterior walls) and inside furniture.

Condensation is commonly caused by low internal room temperatures and a lack of adequate ventilation. The problem can be made worse when heating is not being used to warm the property, or when there are high moisture levels in the air, for example during showering or if you dry damp clothes on radiators.



It's not to be confused with damp.

Damp is something completely different as it's caused by a structural issue with the property, e.g. a leak coming in from the roof due to a broken tile or a part of the external rendering is missing and letting rainwater in. You'll see a visible tidemark or wet patch on the wall/ceiling, which looks very different to mould. Damp is wholly a landlord's responsibility.

Whose responsibility is the prevention of mould during a tenancy?

It's a joint responsibility between landlord and tenant. The landlord needs to provide the tenant with the necessary 'tools' and maintain them. It's then for the tenant to use these 'tools' and live in such a way that does not create the conditions for condensation to turn into mould.

The 'tools' a landlord should look to provide where possible are:

- a fully-working heating system with adequately placed and sized radiators.
- extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms.
- vents in the windows.
- a washing line.
- a tumble dryer.
- information on how mould is created, how to prevent it and how to treat it.

If mould is present when a tenancy starts, whose responsibility is it to deal with it?

It's the landlord's responsibility, as the new tenant can reasonably expect to move into a mould-free home. If the contract permits it, the landlord may choose to claim the cost of cleaning the mould and repainting the area (if required) from the previous tenant's deposit.

How is mould created and prevented?



CREATION: NOT
USING THE
HEATING ENOUGH.

PREVENTION:

Set the boiler timer or thermostat level so that the heating comes on regularly to warm the surfaces in the house, even when away for periods of time. If the radiator isn't hot to touch in all areas, it may need bleeding.



CREATION: DRYING
CLOTHES INDOORS

PREVENTION:

Dry them outside whenever and wherever possible, either via a washing line or a clothes horse. If there is absolutely no alternative to drying clothes indoors, place them placed on heated radiators with the windows open, so as to some of the moisture to escape.

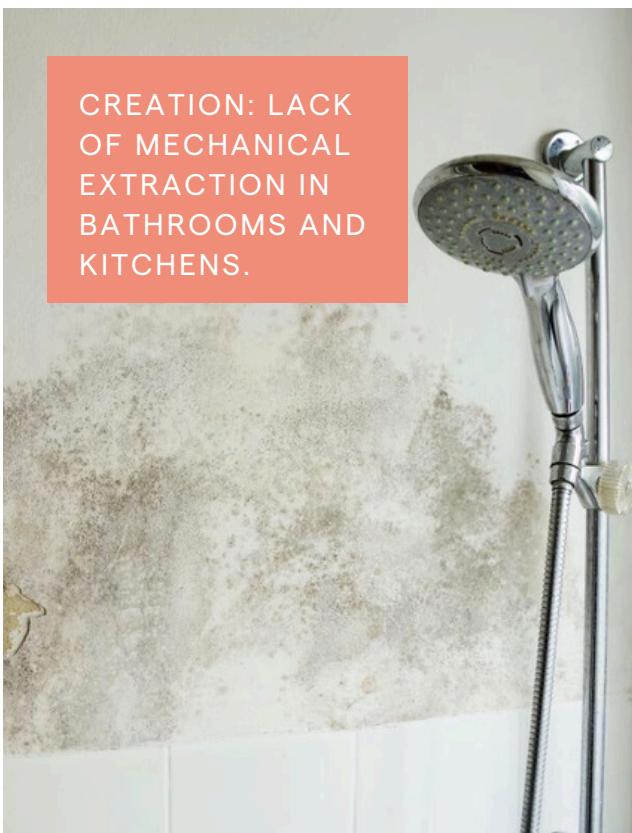


CREATION: NOT
USING LIDS ON PANS
WHEN COOKING.

PREVENTION:

A lid means the moisture that would otherwise be released into the air from boiling liquids is contained to the pans itself, reducing condensation.

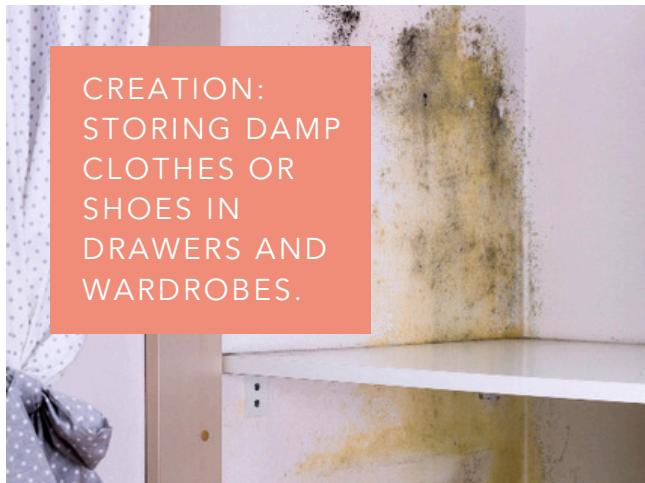
CREATION: LACK OF MECHANICAL EXTRACTION IN BATHROOMS AND KITCHENS.



CREATION: NOT OPENING WINDOWS WHEN SHOWERING AND COOKING.



CREATION: STORING DAMP CLOTHES OR SHOES IN DRAWERS AND WARDROBES.



PREVENTION:

Most bathrooms and kitchens are fitted with extractor fans (or similar) that take moisture away. If these have been turned off at the power switch (perhaps through fear of increased electricity bills), tenants are fighting condensation with one arm tied behind their back. They use a very small amount of electricity, so should be used. They typically only turn on when the bathroom light is on, and when manually turned on if in a kitchen.

PREVENTION:

Extractor fans are useful, but they're not a full cure. There's no substitute for natural ventilation, so opening a window when showering or cooking should always be done.

PREVENTION:

If you store your damp shoes or coat in the wardrobe, as they dry they'll release moisture, which needs to go somewhere. If it can't, it'll sit inside the wardrobe and turn to mould.



CREATION:
NOT
OPENING
VENTS IN
WINDOWS.



CREATION:
FAILING TO WIPE
DOWN DAMP OR
WET SURFACES.



CREATION:
OVERFILLING
DRAWERS AND
WARDROBES.

PREVENTION:

Some tenants don't realise that their windows have a thin vent that can be opened and closed. Again, it's not a cure - and it will create a slight draught - but opening these vents will help.

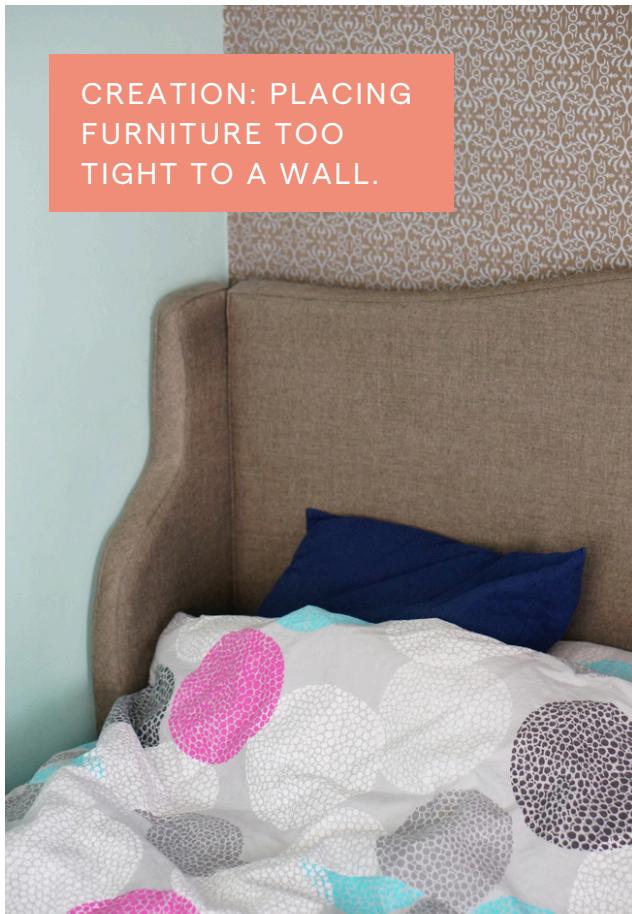
PREVENTION:

Even with extractor fans on, windows ajar, lids on pans and vents open, some condensation will still form. It can be very visible on windows, but less visible on walls. Splashed water from showering or washing hands in the sink will sit on seals unless dried. A heated home will help dry these, but getting a cloth and 'manually' drying the surface is highly advisable. If it isn't dried, it will inevitably turn to mould. We've all seen black seals around sinks and showers.

PREVENTION:

Not only might an overfilled drawer and wardrobe cause it to burst at the seams, but it also restricts the flow of warm air around the furniture, presenting ideal conditions for mould to form.

CREATION: PLACING FURNITURE TOO TIGHT TO A WALL.



PREVENTION:

Walls need to breathe too. When something is pushed tight up against a wall, no warm air can flow between the two, meaning the wall and the item of furniture both stay cold. This is especially true for external walls because they're colder, so try to put furniture on internal walls where possible. We've seen backs of wardrobes, chests of drawers and beds - and the wall they've been up against - all turn mouldy over the years. Always leave a gap of a few centimetres to let the air flow between.

CREATION: NOT USING THE TUMBLE DRYER PROVIDED



PREVENTION:

Running a tumble dryer may not cost as much as people think. Additionally, if a landlord has provided a tumble dryer, it's a reasonable expectation that the tenants should use it.

Mould resulting from unchecked condensation is not only unsightly, but may damage your belongings, or could also affect your health and well-being. Please follow these tips throughout your tenancy.

We recommend you prioritise reading Cardiff council's guide too. ([read online](#))



How is mould treated?

To remove the mould safely and stop it coming back, first ensure the area is ventilated, then spray it with a bleach solution. There are many products available in supermarkets, such as Dettol's Mould & Mildew Remover or Astonish's Mould & Mildew Blaster.

Make sure to follow the instructions on the bottle and check the one you have is suitable for the specific surface or material you're treating. Consider wearing a mask that covers your nose and mouth to protect against mould spores, especially if you have allergies or respiratory concerns. If you have goggles and rubber gloves, it's a good idea to wear them as well.

Gently wipe down the area afterwards, and repeat if needed.