

The  
Vulnerability  
Initiative



# Coping with Damp and Mould

A Practical Guide to  
Damp and Mould Issues

Developed by

HEALTHY  
HOMES  
SOLUTIONS

If you are feeling  
vulnerable, scan  
the QR code to  
register



Top Tips

Top tips to prevent  
damp and mould

Support

Support options  
for your home

[www.healthyhomessolutions.co.uk](http://www.healthyhomessolutions.co.uk)

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## 1 Understanding Damp, Mould and Your Health

Living in a damp home isn't just unpleasant; it can seriously affect your health and wellbeing. This is especially true if you have existing health conditions or a weakened immune system.

### Who Needs to Be Extra Careful?

Anyone can be affected by damp and mould, but some people need to take extra care:

- ! People with breathing problems, allergies or respiratory issues
  - ! Children whose smaller airways make them more vulnerable
  - ! People with kidney conditions
  - ! Anyone receiving medical treatment
  - ! Adults who may have weaker immune systems, making them more susceptible to infections and respiratory issues
  - ! People with disabilities i.e. who can't reach windows
  - ! Those with weakened immune systems
- See our checklist on page 16 for more info

### You're Not Alone

Damp and mould can affect anyone, especially if you're recovering from illness, managing a long-term condition, or caring for someone who is vulnerable.

If you are feeling vulnerable, scan the QR code to register with The Vulnerability Initiative



## 2 Where to Find Help With Damp & Mould

Sorting out damp and mould can be overwhelming, especially when you have enough worries on your plate as it is. Support and helpful guidance are available from:

### Where to find help

- Your healthcare team
- Your local council's environmental health team
- The organisations mentioned on page 19 of this guide

### Important!

If you're concerned about damp and mould affecting your health, you should speak with your healthcare team.

If you do not have a healthcare team, then use our "Need Help Section" on page 7 to see where you can get help from.



### Social Housing Residents

If you live in social housing and are dealing with damp and mould:

Reach out to your housing officer or local council housing department.

#### Helpful Resources:

- Search for: [Government Guidance for Social Landlords](#)
- Search for: [Housing Ombudsman Damp and Mould Key Topics](#)

### Private Rental Tenants

If you rent privately and have damp and mould issues, inform your Landlord in writing about the problem. They are legally required to address health and safety hazards.

#### Helpful Resources:

- Search for: [Government Guidance for Private Renters](#)
- Contact your [Local Council for Support](#)

### Property Owners

If you own or are paying a mortgage on your home, consider getting a professional survey to identify the cause of damp and mould.

#### Helpful Resources:

Search for: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and [Understanding Damp and Mould Health Risks](#)

## 3 Looking After Your Health

If you have a weakened immune system or are living with a kidney condition, keeping your environment healthy is an important part of your overall care.

### Damp and mould can:



Trigger breathing problems



Affect your immune system



Worsen existing health conditions



Impact your mental wellbeing

### Important!

If you have a kidney condition or are older, you may be more vulnerable to the effects of damp and mould.

A weakened immune system can make it harder to fight off health issues caused by damp conditions.

If you need support with your kidney condition, **follow the link via the QR code**



**Kidney Care UK**

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## 4 What Causes Damp And Mould?

Damp and mould can develop in any home when excess moisture isn't properly managed. Understanding the common causes, both visible and hidden, can help you take steps to prevent these issues and create a healthier living environment.

Here's what to look out for:

### Daily Activities:

- **Cooking:** Boiling water without pan lids adds moisture to the air
- **Drying Clothes Indoors:** Hanging clothes indoors, especially on radiators or near heaters, releases trapped water into the air
- **Hot Showers/Baths:** Steam from baths or showers builds up if not ventilated
- **Unvented Appliances:** Tumble dryers or heaters without proper vents trap moisture

### Outside Influences



#### Building Issues:

Damaged roof tiles, cracked walls, rising damp from the ground, or blocked drains and pipes can introduce moisture into your home.



#### Weather-Related

Heavy rain, snow, or ice can seep through walls or damage poorly maintained roofs, while inadequate drainage around your home can cause water pooling and damp.

### How to Spot Different Types of Damp

#### 1. Condensation

- Appears on windows and cold walls
- Worse in the morning
- Water droplets on surfaces
- Often in corners and behind furniture

#### 2. Rising Damp

- Damp patches at the bottom of walls
- Damaged skirting boards
- Peeling wallpaper at floor level
- Tide marks on walls

#### 3. Penetrating Damp

- Damp patches that grow
- Often appears after rain
- Usually on external walls
- Can show up around windows

## 5 Need Help In Working Out What's Causing Your Damp & Mould?

### Taking the Next Step

If you have noticed any signs of damp in your home you should:

1. Make a note of where you see damp and when it appears
2. Take photos if you can
3. Keep a record of any health symptoms you experience
4. Share these with your healthcare team and landlord if appropriate

You should report the issue in writing to your landlord or council as soon as possible.

Shelter can help with advice on how to raise the issue to your landlord here:

<https://england.shelter.org.uk/>



### Remember!

You're not being a bother by reporting damp problems. Your health matters, and dealing with damp early can prevent bigger issues later.

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## 6 Letting Your Home Breathe: A Guide to Ventilation

Good airflow in your home is like breathing; it's absolutely essential for a healthy living space. Let's explore how you can keep your home well-ventilated, even when it's challenging to do so.

### Why Ventilation Matters

Fresh air improves your home and your health by:

- Removing moisture that can lead to damp and mould
- Improving air quality to help you feel better and more energised

### Simple Ways to Improve Airflow

- Even short bursts of fresh air can make a real difference in high-humidity areas; crack your windows for 5-10 minutes after activities like showering or cooking to reduce the moisture in the air
- Ventilate during high-moisture activities: cooking, showering, or drying clothes
- If possible, make use of trickle vents on windows to reduce condensation without letting too much heat out

### When Opening Windows Isn't an Option

- ✓ Keep extractor fans running for 15-20 minutes after cooking or showering
- ✓ Check that vents or air bricks aren't blocked
- ✓ Use moisture absorbers or keep furniture slightly away from external walls.

### Get Support

- ! If you are renting, speak with your landlord about extractor fan repairs
- ! Ask your local council about ventilation grants
- ! Contact adult social care at your local council to arrange a home assessment

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## 7 Finding and Fixing Leaks: Your Practical Guide

Water is one of the main causes of damp and mould in homes. Spotting and addressing leaks early is crucial to maintaining a healthy, dry living environment. Here's how to identify and resolve potential issues before they escalate.

### Spotting the Signs of Leaks

#### Visual Clues

- Dark or discoloured patches on walls or ceilings
- Peeling wallpaper or bubbling paint
- Warped or stained woodwork
- Persistent puddles or damp patches

#### Other Signs

- Musty or earthy smells
- Higher than usual water bills
- Sounds of dripping or rushing water when it's not in use
- Damp carpets or flooring

### Where to Check for Leaks

#### In Your Kitchen

- Under sinks and around taps
- Behind and beneath the dishwasher, washing machine and fridge
- Behind the fridge (if it has a water connection)
- Pipework connections and joints

#### In Your Bathroom

- Around bath and shower seals
- Beneath toilets, basins and baths
- Where pipes enter walls or floors

### Remember!

Always wear a mask, protective clothing and gloves if treating damp and mould.

### What to Do If You Find a Leak

- ✓ If you are renting, report them to your landlord as soon as possible
- ✓ Clean and dry affected surfaces to prevent mould growth
- ✓ Open windows or use extractor fans to reduce moisture
- ✓ For severe leaks or structural issues, seek professional help (Page 19)

## 8 Managing Moisture: Your Guide to Dehumidifiers

Damp can be a challenge, but with the right tools, you can take control. A dehumidifier acts like a “moisture magnet,” pulling excess water from the air to create a healthier, more comfortable home. While it won’t solve underlying issues, it can make a noticeable difference.

### Dehumidifiers can:



Make rooms feel warmer



Reduce window condensation



Help clothes dry faster indoors



Protect your belongings from damp damage

While dehumidifiers can be effective at reducing moisture, we understand that both purchasing and running one can be expensive. If you’re of retirement age and concerned about costs, please call Independent Age on **0800 319 6789** for a free benefits check to ensure you’re receiving all available support to help keep your home warm and dry. For all other age groups you may be able to find can also find additional financial assistance programs on **page 14** of this guide.

### Consider the size of your space

Choose the right dehumidifier for your room size:

- 1. Small rooms (up to 20m<sup>2</sup>)**  
Use 10L capacity
- 2. Medium rooms (up to 30m<sup>2</sup>)**  
Use 12-15L capacity
- 3. Large rooms (30m<sup>2</sup>+)**   
Use 20L+ capacity

### Ideal Humidity Levels

- ✓ **40-60%:** Comfortable and mould-free
- ! **Below 40%:** Too dry and uncomfortable
- ! **Above 60%:** Encourages damp & mould growth

## 9 Staying Warm and Dry: Finding the Right Balance

Keeping your home warm and insulated is essential for comfort and health, but don’t forget the other half of the equation—good ventilation. Without it, condensation can form, leading to damp and mould, undoing your hard work. Here’s how to create a warm, dry home while maintaining the right balance.

### Why Insulation and Ventilation Matters

Think of insulation as your home’s winter coat—it keeps warmth in and cold out. Proper heating helps maintain stable temperatures, while ventilation acts like a breath of fresh air, preventing moisture from building up.

### Tips for Insulation and Heating

#### Insulation

- **Loft:** Prevent heat escaping by topping up insulation—your loft is like a hat for your home
- **Walls:** Cavity wall insulation (for post-1920s homes) or solid wall insulation (for older homes) keeps heat in
- **Windows and Doors:** Double glazing reduces cold spots and condensation. Use draft excluders to block gaps

#### Heating

- Keep a steady, background temperature—sudden cooling can create condensation
- Use timers to heat rooms before use and focus on spaces you spend the most time in
- Watch for cold spots that may need extra insulation

### Don’t Forget Ventilation

#### Simple Ventilation Habits

- ✓ Use extractor fans and windows in kitchens and bathrooms during and after cooking or showering
- ✓ Install mechanical ventilation with timers installed to save on costs
- ✓ Keep internal doors open to improve airflow throughout the home

#### Quick Fixes to Start Today

- 1.** Ensure there is adequate ventilation when drying clothes inside
- 2.** After bathing or showering open the window for a short period to help remove condensation
- 3.** Keep lids on pans when cooking and trickle vents open to reduce the build up of condensation



## 10 Tackling Mould Safely: Tips for Treatment and Prevention

Mould can be a serious concern, especially if you or someone in your home has respiratory issues, young children, or other health conditions. Acting without the right knowledge or protection can worsen the situation. Here's how to handle mould safely while keeping your health and home in mind.

### Staying Safe When Cleaning Small Patches

You can safely clean small areas of surface mould (less than an A4 size) if you follow these steps:

For more tips, visit **Which** or search: "Which How to get rid of damp and mould"



**Protect yourself:** Wear gloves, an N95 mask, and eye protection



**Ensure good ventilation** by opening windows



**If you are not comfortable:** Get a professional in to help



**Do not use bleach:** Mould treatment sprays are readily available

### How To Prevent Mould

#### Daily Habits:

- Wipe condensation from windows each morning
- Keep trickle vents open to prevent condensation from building
- Open windows briefly for fresh air, even in winter

#### Home Improvements:

- Keep furniture slightly away from external walls for airflow
- Use moisture-resistant paint in bathrooms
- Fix dripping taps and clear gutters to prevent water buildup



## 11 Regular Maintenance: Daily Mould Protection Routine

Looking after your home doesn't need to be overwhelming. Small, regular checks can prevent big problems with damp and mould, protecting both your property and your health.

### Regular Checks: Inside and Outside

#### Inside Your Home

- Look for dark patches, peeling wallpaper, or crumbling plaster on walls and ceilings
- Check for musty smells, especially in corners or behind furniture
- Wipe away condensation from windows every morning to reduce moisture buildup

#### Outside Your Home

Seek specialist help to:

- Inspect roof tiles for damage or gaps
- Clear gutters and downpipes to prevent water overflow
- Check for cracks in walls and ensure window and door seals are intact

If you are renting, some things may be your landlord's responsibility. Check your contract to find out.

### Seasonal Maintenance Calendar

Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
✓ Clear gutters of winter debris	✓ Check garden drainage during heavy rain	✓ Clear fallen leaves from gutters and drains	✓ Keep your home warm and well-ventilated
✓ Check roof after winter storms	✓ Ensure air bricks aren't blocked by plants	✓ Check heating system works properly	✓ Seek specialist help to check pipes for freezing in cold spells
✓ Open windows regularly	✓ Seek specialist help to look for cracked or missing roof tiles	✓ Inspect window seals before winter	✓ Seek specialist help to look for ridges of ice on roof edges

## 12

## Financial Assistance and Grants for Damp Problems

Don't let money worries stop you from tackling damp and mould. There are several ways to get financial help and support but you will need to apply to check your eligibility.

### Search Disabled Facilities Grant

- For essential home adaptations
- Can include damp-proofing if affecting health
- Apply through your local council

### Search Home Repair Assistance Grant

- Covers essential repairs for eligible homeowners
- Contact your council's housing department

### Search Energy Company Obligation (ECO) Scheme

- Free insulation and heating improvements
- Help to stop condensation

You may be able to get free or low-cost insulation from the government's Great British Insulation Scheme. To apply, search 'great British insulation scheme' or call the helpline on 0800 098 7950.

### Many water Companies offer:

- Free water-saving devices
- Help finding and fixing leaks
- Support with water bills

### Support for Tenants

#### Housing Association Tenants:

Your housing provider has a legal responsibility to provide you with a home that is safe and dry. They are responsible for:

- Major damp-proofing work
- Structural repairs
- Ventilation improvements

**Private Tenants:** Your landlord is legally obligated to fix damp caused by:

- Rising damp from the ground
- Penetrating damp through the walls
- Structural issues

### Charitable Support

Charities can also help, including:

- Turn2us: Helps identify grants you may qualify for
- Citizens Advice: Free advice on housing and financial assistance
- Local charities: Support tailored to your community

## 13

## Looking After Your Health: Staying Safe from Damp and Mould

Keeping your home free from damp and mould is important. Damp conditions can make managing your health harder, but with small steps and the right support, you can protect yourself.

### The Impact of Damp and Mould

Living in a damp home can effect your health because:

- **Weakened Immunity:** Your body may struggle to fight infections
- **Medications:** Some treatments can make you more vulnerable to illnesses
- **Mould Spores:** can sensitise babies and young children, making them vulnerable to respiratory diseases like asthma for life
- **Mould worsens existing respiratory conditions** like asthma, bronchitis, or COPD in older children and adults

### Spotting Problems Early

Recognising damp or mould quickly is key. Look out for:

#### In your home:

- Wet patches on walls or ceilings
- A musty smell in any room
- Peeling wallpaper or black spots near windows or on walls or ceilings

#### In your health:

- More tired than usual
- Coughing, sneezing, or a blocked nose
- Itchy eyes or skin



### Important

If you notice these, tell your GP, kidney team, or family immediately, or report it to your landlord if renting.



## 14

## Your Home Health Checklist: Managing Damp and Mould

Number	Topic	Description	Complete
1	Spot the Signs Early	Look for wet patches, peeling wallpaper, black spots, or musty smells. Regular checks can catch problems before they escalate	
2	Ventilate Your Home	Use trickle vents during high-humidity activities like drying clothes, and extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms to remove moisture	
3	Maintain a Steady Temperature	Keep your home warm with consistent heating. Avoid sudden temperature drops to reduce condensation (See No.12 if you need help with grants)	
4	Monitor Humidity Levels	Use a humidity monitor (hygrometer) and aim for a reading between 40-60%. Run a dehumidifier in problem areas if needed	
5	Check Key Areas Regularly	Inspect ceilings, walls, behind furniture, under sinks, and window sills for signs of damp or mould	
6	Keep Surfaces Dry	Wipe condensation from windows, mirrors, and walls daily to prevent moisture buildup	

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Number	Topic	Description	Complete
7	Address Repairs Promptly	Fix leaks in taps, pipes, or gutters, and report structural issues like cracked walls or roofs immediately	
8	Keep Gutters and Drains Clear	Regularly check and clear gutters, drains, and downpipes to prevent water overflow and moisture problems	
9	Avoid DIY for Major Issues	Don't clean large mould patches or tackle severe damp without professional help.	
10	Protect Vulnerable Residents	If someone in your home has kidney disease, respiratory conditions, or is elderly, take extra precautions and avoid exposure to damp or mould	
11	Seek Professional Support	Contact your landlord, housing association, or local council for help with persistent issues. Charities like Citizens Advice can also provide support	
12	Get Help with Grants	If you're of retirement age call the Independent Age Helpline on 0800 319 6789 for a free benefits check	

## 15 Top Tips for Managing Damp & Mould

### ✓ Keep an Eye Out

Regularly check for wet patches, peeling wallpaper, or black spots on walls, ceilings, and behind furniture

### ✓ Let Your Home Breathe

Utilise trickle vents if possible and use extractor fans when cooking or showering

### ✓ Stay Consistently Warm

Maintain a steady temperature in your home to reduce condensation buildup

### ✓ Use a Dehumidifier

Place one in problem areas to manage moisture levels effectively

### ✓ Wipe Away Condensation

Remove water droplets from windows and surfaces each morning to prevent damp

### ✓ Fix Leaks Quickly

Address leaking pipes, gutters, or roof issues as soon as you notice them

### ✓ Keep Gutters and Drains Clear

Seek specialist help to regularly remove debris to stop water from overflowing near your home

### ✓ Protect Vulnerable Residents

If someone in your home has respiratory conditions, kidney disease, is elderly, an infant or young child avoid exposure to damp or mould

### ✓ Don't DIY Large Mould Patches

Seek professional help for mould larger than A4 paper or recurring damp problems

### ✓ Ask for Help

Contact your landlord, housing association, or local council for assistance. Explore grants through NEA or the NEF if needed

### ✓ Improve Ventilation in Key Areas

Ensure kitchen, bathroom, and air bricks remain unblocked for better airflow

### ✓ Keep Furniture Away from Walls

Allow air to circulate by leaving a small gap between external walls and furniture

### ✓ Use Natural Light and Heat

Open curtains during the day to let sunlight in, helping keep damp at bay

### ✓ Record and Report Issues

Take photos, keep a diary of damp conditions, and notify your housing provider or council

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## 16 Key Links For Support With Damp & Mould

NEA Help Pages (Energy support advice)	<a href="http://www.nea.org.uk">www.nea.org.uk</a>
NEF Help Pages (In-Home Survey)	Better Homes Better Housing (NEF): <a href="http://www.bhbm.org.uk">www.bhbm.org.uk</a>
Government Links:	a. In Social Housing: Social housing repairs
	b. Private Rental: Private rental rights and repairs
	c. Owner Occupier: Home improvement help
Benefits Check Through The Vulnerability Initiative	Assistance for households to check eligibility for benefits.  Government Home Improvement Grants Through The Vulnerability Initiative  Information on available grants for home improvements.
Warm Home Discount Scheme	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme">www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme</a>
Citizens Advice for Repairs and Damp	<a href="http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk">www.citizensadvice.org.uk</a>
NHS Inform (Damp and Mould Health Guidance)	<a href="http://www.nhsinform.scot">www.nhsinform.scot</a>
Energy Efficiency Grants via ECO Scheme	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/energy-company-obligation">www.gov.uk/energy-company-obligation</a>
Kidney Care UK	<a href="http://www.kidneycareuk.org">www.kidneycareuk.org</a>
Independent Age (Free benefit checks for older people)	<a href="http://www.independentage.org">www.independentage.org</a>
The Vulnerability Initiative (VI)	Support for vulnerable individuals and families: <a href="http://www.thevulnerabilityinitiative.org">www.thevulnerabilityinitiative.org</a>

## The Vulnerability Initiative

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