



TOTAL
Landlord



Damp and mould: a tenant's checklist

Your landlord is legally obliged to provide you with a property that's in good condition – which includes being free from any damp or mould – and must make sure it stays that way throughout your tenancy.

At the same time, you need to take reasonable steps to look after the property while you're living there and should inform your landlord right away if you notice any issues with the property, its fittings or services, so they can be fixed quickly before they become a big or long-term issue.

We've put together this checklist to help you recognise what type of damp you might have and what you can and should do about it.

Rising damp

- ✓ A 'damp', musty smell
- ✓ Patches of damp on the walls of rooms on the ground floor, rising to about one metre
- ✓ Low-level 'tide marks' on the wall
- ✓ Wallpaper peeling at the bottom
- ✓ Low-level mould growth

If you see any of these signs, it's likely to be rising damp. This is where moisture in the ground is allowed to seep up through the mortar and masonry of the property and it happens when a damp course either hasn't been installed or has failed.

This is very much the landlord's issue (or their managing agent) and it's down to them to resolve the problem. However, you are responsible for alerting them as soon as you notice any signs, otherwise the landlord might be able to claim some of the repair costs from you.

Penetrating damp

- ✓ A 'damp', musty smell
- ✓ Dark or discoloured patches on walls or plaster work, particularly higher up on the walls
- ✓ Walls or ceilings that feel cold and wet to the touch
- ✓ Peeling wallpaper or peeling/blistered paintwork
- ✓ Mould growth

This is caused by water getting into the property from outside, often because of a combination of blocked or broken guttering and cracked brickwork.

Again, this is the landlord's/agent's responsibility to fix – all you need to do is report the problem as soon as you become aware of it.

Mildew or 'surface mould'

- ✓ Small, dark grey or white spots that appear flat and 'powdery' in texture
- ✓ Spots appearing in areas where a lot of excess moisture tends to gather, e.g. on the bathroom ceiling, around the edges of the bath, at the edges of windows

This is where excess moisture has become trapped in the property, settled on surfaces and attracted mould growth. It's common in homes and forms as a result of everyday activities, such as cooking, washing and drying clothes.

In this case, you can help avoid mildew through proper ventilation - using extractor fans and opening windows - and wiping away any condensation that collects. If you do find small patches of mildew forming, you should be able to remove it yourself with some mould spray, which you can pick up from any DIY store for around £5 – just remember to wear gloves and follow the safety advice on the bottle.



Top tips for keeping the property free from condensation and mildew

In the kitchen and bathroom:

- ✓ Keep the door closed while you're cooking/washing so that the excess moisture doesn't spread around the whole house
- ✓ Use the extractor fan and/or open a window to let any steam escape
- ✓ Use lids on saucepans to contain some of the steam
- ✓ Close the door again after you've finished using the room and leave it to ventilate for a short while
- ✓ Close the window and leave the door ajar so it can slowly warm up again, without a rush of cold air flooding into the rest of the property

Around the property:

- ✓ When condensation forms on windows, it can run down and pool on the windowsill - make sure to wipe this away so it doesn't attract mould spores
- ✓ Avoid drying wet clothes on radiators and keep the space around them clear so the warm air can circulate properly
- ✓ Make sure any room used for hanging out laundry is well ventilated
- ✓ Keep the thermostat at a minimum of 15°C in very cold weather - not only will this help reduce condensation levels in the property, but it will protect the pipework from freezing

Always report any damp and mould issues as soon as possible and in writing. If emailing, ask for a 'read receipt' and keep this noted. Your landlord or managing agent must then legally respond within 14 days, to let you know how they intend to resolve the issue and when.

Finally, a health warning

Importantly, be aware that mould attracts dust mites, which produce allergens that can be damaging to your health – causing anything from coughing, sneezing and skin irritation to breathing difficulties. So, if there is mould growth, try to keep away from it until it's removed.

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