

Ongoing mould problems

If you have mould growing in your home, it is important you clean it up before you dry out the house, since dry mould is more likely to release spores.

Make sure the source of moisture is addressed – remove subfloor liquefaction and roof leaks and keep damp, humid areas well-ventilated.

Better ventilation, more heating and higher levels of insulation can prevent the growth of moulds. Simple measures, such as opening windows during the day to let fresh air into the house and using an extractor fan in the bathroom and kitchen are helpful.

- If you have rangehood in the kitchen, use the extractor fan to help keep moisture down.
- Close the door when showering and vent your tumble dryer to the outside.
- Allow lots of light to get into your home by removing trees and shrubs that block light and open the curtains during the daylight hours.

Mould cannot grow without high humidity or condensation so keep temperatures in occupied areas within 18–21°C and humidity between 40%–70%.

Consider purchasing a dehumidifier where damp is an ongoing problem. For occupied areas, use a gentle background heat, e.g. use an oil column heater on low to help prevent condensation forming.

If you can still see or smell mould after cleaning an area, you may have a hidden mould problem. Mould may be hidden behind walls, wallpaper, panels or embedded in porous material.

If you are the homeowner, think about insulating the subfloor and ceiling areas appropriately. A heating/ventilation system that extracts or circulates warm air is also worth consideration. In both cases, professional advice should be sought on installation

Toxic black mould

If toxic black mould is found or suspected to be affecting an area of the building, a specialist contractor needs to be employed to carry out the identification and removal process.

The culprit – Black Mould *Stachybotrys chartarum* – is hazardous but treatable. Affected areas will need to be sealed off from other parts of the building and workers will need to use special protective equipment.

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Further information

If people in your house suffer significant health problems that you think are caused by moulds, visit your GP for a medical assessment.

If your doctor thinks your symptoms are related to living in a mouldy home, ask them to refer your case to Community and Public Health for general advice.

For advice about the condition of the building, contact Christchurch City Council on 03 941 8999

Mould testing and removal

Local firms that currently test for mould and also carry out remediation include:

K2 Environmental	03 384 8966
Decontamination Medix	0800 332 661
Enviro	0800 744 272

**This list is not definitive and is provided for information purposes only. It should not be seen to imply any guarantee or approval by Council.*

For more advice on mould removal, talk to a builder or professional mould removal/safety firm listed in the Yellow Pages

Environmental Health Team

CO-Inspections and Enforcement Unit
77 Hereford Street, 5th Floor, PO Box 73049
Telephone: 941 8999. Email: info@ccc.govt.nz
Or visit our website: www.ccc.govt.nz

Mould removal

Advice for homeowners and tenants



What is mould?

Moulds are fungi that are found almost everywhere, indoors and out, year round. Moulds act as nature's decomposers, breaking down organic matter. They can be various colours including white, green, red or black.

Moulds reproduce by releasing microscopic spores into the air, which can enter homes through windows, doors, cracks, and vents.

Moulds need moisture to grow. Controlling moisture in your home is the most important step you can take to reduce mould.



What are the health effects?

Exposure to mould and mould spores can cause a range of reactions. These include: eye irritation (watery, burning, itchy), runny nose, sneezing, nasal and sinus congestion, sore throat, coughing, wheezing, headaches and fatigue.

Sensitivity to mould varies from person to person. One person may react severely to levels that cause no symptoms in another person. In general, the following groups are most susceptible to mould:

- Infants and children.
- The elderly.
- Immune compromised individuals.
- People with allergies.
- People with respiratory problems such as asthma, chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

How do I clean mould at home?

Any treatment of mould must address the source of the moisture in the area, whether it is from a leak, condensation, excessive humidity, or flooding.

If an area is cleaned of mould, but the moisture problem remains, the mould will return.

Common sources of indoor moisture include: steam from showers and cooking; wet clothes drying indoors or clothes dryers that are not vented to the outside; flooding; leaky roofs or walls; plumbing leaks; overflow from gutters; overflow from sinks or sewers.

Cleaning will temporarily increase the amount of mould and mould spores in the air.

I am renting a property where mould is growing in the building, what should I do?

Mould and mildew caused by structural faults or leaks should be fixed by the owner but the tenant must ensure there is adequate ventilation and that humidity is kept to a minimum (below 70%) to avoid mould problems in winter.

If you have ensured that the building is properly heated and aired but mould is still growing, you need to raise the issue with the owner or property agent.

Should I hire a professional?

If you have respiratory problems like asthma or bronchitis or if the affected area is large, it is recommended that you consult a professional as cleaning mould yourself will increase your exposure to mould and bleach fumes.

You may wish to hire a professional firm particularly when mould is sited in difficult-to-reach places, such as in heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems.

Cleaning up mould

1. Identify and fix any sources of moisture first.
2. Open windows and doors to allow lots of fresh air into the area.
3. Remove, wrap and discard non-essential mouldy porous material (ceiling tiles, cloth, paper, carpet, etc). Hard materials like glass or metal can be kept after cleaning.
4. Prepare a solution of 1.5 cups of household bleach to 4 litres of cold water. Be wary of using bleach on delicate/non-colourfast material – follow the maker's guidelines or use 80% fermented white vinegar.
5. Apply solution to the affected area by spray and leave for 10–15 minutes.
6. Wipe down with moistened paper towels or disposable cloth.
7. For hard materials such as glass, plastic or metal, clean the affected area with solution, rinse completely with hot water and allow to dry thoroughly.



8. Cleaning may temporarily increase the amount of mould and spores in the air. During cleaning, it is best to use disposable rubber gloves, goggles, and a mask – available at your local hardware store.
9. Some moulds may also irritate the skin, so long-sleeved shirts and pants are advisable for avoiding direct contact with mould and with the cleaning agents in use.