

A HEALTHY HOME

Preventive measures for controlling moisture
and the proliferation of mould

Montréal 



How can mould problems be prevented?

Discover various ways to protect your health, your furniture and your home by following this practical advice.

Nowadays, our homes can be extremely airtight – which is all well and good, as they shield us from the elements. Household moisture can cause mould, however, particularly in the wintertime when the windows are closed and the cold produces condensation.

Simply put, never let mould spread inside your home. It can cause respiratory problems and damage your home and furniture, to say nothing of the noxious odour it gives off.

The following pages review situations that most often lead to excessive moisture. Learn about how mould can grow in each room in a home and what you can do to avoid it.



DID YOU KNOW?

Each day, a family of four releases 10 to 50 litres of water vapour into their environment simply by breathing and carrying out day-to-day activities.



KITCHEN

Many kitchen activities generate large amounts of water vapour. Certain appliances (fridge, dishwasher, gas stove) are also a potential source of moisture.

Risk factors

- 1 Steam cooking
- 2 Dishwashing
- 3 Excessive storage of household items in cupboards that were built next to an uninsulated outside wall
- 4 The presence of easily perishable food (cereal, potatoes, onions, etc.)

Keep an eye out for any:

- Moisture under the sink or counter
- Damaged surfaces under the sink
- Mould in cupboards and corners of outdoor walls
- Musty odours in the pantry
- Mould behind the refrigerator, in the condensation pan or on window sills

GOOD TO KNOW

Running a kitchen range hood for at least five minutes when no food is being cooked usually suffices to change the air in the room

Prevention tips

- Frequently run the kitchen range hood and cover pots when simmering or boiling
- Check the condition of sealant joints around the sink and counter
- Regularly check plumbing fixtures for condensation and leaks
- Don't store damp objects in closed or confined spaces
- Occasionally open cupboard doors
- Leave a space between household objects and exterior walls
- Regularly clean your fridge
- Avoid using a large amount of water to wash the floors
- Use recommended amounts of maintenance and sanitation products
- Keep surfaces dry

Ask the landlord to take action:

- If leaks appear around the edges of the sink and faucet assembly
- If there are no sealant joints around the sink or counter or if the joints are decayed
- If there is water infiltration from exterior windows or doors



The bathroom – often the smallest room in a household – produces the most moisture in a home.

Risk factors

- ❶ Door frequently kept closed
- ❷ Frequent use of the shower or bath
- ❸ Presence of damp towels
- ❹ Laundry spread out to dry
- ❺ Condensation forms on bathroom plumbing fixture

Keep an eye out for any:

- Condensation and mould stains on the ceiling and walls
- Black stains on window sills
- Damaged drywall panels
- Peeling paint
- Missing or cracked ceramic sealant joints
- Mould on ceramic sealant joints
- Accumulation of water around the toilet and bathtub
- Condensation on the toilet tank

Prevention tips

- Leave the door open when the bathroom is not in use
- Run the fan when the bathroom is in use
- Do not unplug the fan, as it flushes out excess moisture
- Keep the shower curtain closed in order to avoid splatter
- Dry the shower walls after use
- Keep the number of damp towels to a minimum
- Regularly clean the toilet with appropriate anti-fungal maintenance products

Ask the landlord to take action

- If there are any plumbing leaks
- If the bathroom has no natural ventilation or functional mechanical ventilation
- If plaster, sealant joints or ceramic tiles are damaged or missing
- If condensation builds up on the toilet tank

GOOD TO KNOW

Keeping the bathroom door closed all day gives mould an ideal environment in which to grow.

LIVING ROOM AND BEDROOM



In living rooms and bedrooms, closets and cabinets are often built against an outdoor wall. The accumulation of clothes and belongings in these areas, combined with a lack of ventilation, can pose a risk of condensation, resulting in the proliferation of mould.

Risk factors

- 1 Large amount of furniture, some of which is placed against exterior walls
- 2 Use of a humidifier without humidity control adjustment settings
- 3 Having an aquarium and indoor plants

Keep an eye out for any:

- Condensation on windows
- Mould around window sills or closets or behind furniture
- Dark circles on paint or peeling paint
- Fabrics that smell of mould
- Closets that smell of moisture

Prevention tips

- Open the windows for a few minutes every day (even in winter)
- Clean and dry the window frames
- Use a hygrometer to measure moisture levels

- Do not overheat the room (over 22°C)
- Open the curtains during the day and make sure they don't cover heating units
- Reduce the amount of furniture and decorative accessories
- Move the furniture away from exterior walls or windows
- Open the closet doors regularly to change the air
- Avoid placing any damp clothing near heating units without proper ventilation (fan)
- Clean ventilation and heating units
- Fight allergens by using a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter and frequently washing bedding

Ask the landlord to take action

- There is water seepage through windows or outside doors
- There are any defects in heating equipment

GOOD TO KNOW

It is easier to heat dry air than humid air. During the wintertime, ambient humidity should be at 30%, which also reduces heating costs.



Basements and crawl spaces are damper and colder than the other rooms in a building. The type of foundation may also be a major source of moisture.

Risk factors

- ❶ The presence of a washtub, washer and dryer
- ❷ Dryer exhaust not venting outdoors
- ❸ Storage of firewood
- ❹ Disorderly storage of articles
- ❺ A water heater

Keep an eye out for any:

- Any rugs or carpeting, which absorb moisture
- Floors or walls that are wet or that retain moisture
- White, powdery stains on the concrete of walls or floors
- Condensation on the windows
- Blackened window sills
- Mould growth on stored articles
- A musty smell

Prevention tips

- Use a dehumidifier, making sure that its water pan is emptied and its filter changed on a regular basis
- Do not install carpeting
- Make sure the clothes dryer vents outdoors
- Store firewood outside your home
- Keep the basement adequately heated
- Do not store materials on the ground or close to the walls

Ask the landlord to take action

- If there are any plumbing leaks or condensation on the pipes
- If there is mould on the structures of the walls and in the insulation
- If there is no water-tight cover on the sump or floor drains
- If the lot slopes toward the building foundation

GOOD TO KNOW

In the spring, the bottom of the foundation walls is often colder than the outdoor air temperature. Opening the windows too soon in the season can lead to condensation on cold walls.

Reminder

It is important to quickly remove mould as soon as it appears, in order to prevent its spread.

Cleaning mould buildup on small surfaces (1 m²)

Household occupants, except for people suffering from asthma or allergies, can easily clean small surfaces. However, it is recommended that you wear a proper protective mask (P100 type).

Washable surfaces

- Scrub with a detergent solution, rinse and quickly dry.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when using cleaning products and never mix several products together.

Plaster or gypsum plasterboard surface

- Clean with a slightly damp cloth and bicarbonate of soda or a bit of detergent, then dry quickly.

Porous materials (cardboard boxes, papers, mineral wool, etc.)

- Dispose of porous articles that are mouldy or those that have sustained serious water damage.

For large-scale cleaning and renovation projects:

Ask your landlord to intervene and he or she will hire a specialized company to safely carry out the necessary work.

INFORMATION

BE CAREFUL... YOUR HEALTH DEPENDS ON IT.

If you rigorously apply these recommendations but see that there are still worrisome signs in your home, investigate or ask your landlord to identify the source of moisture and implement the proper corrective measures.

If your landlord fails to take action after having been informed about the situation in writing, phone **311**. A borough inspector may be dispatched to intervene.

For further information, visit the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Web site:
schl.ca or ville.montreal.qc.ca/housing.