New Forest
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Condensation, damp, and mould

Advice on how to reduce problems caused by condensation, damp, and mould in your home

Concerned about mould in your home?
Or have signs of damp?

It's important to know how to spot the early signs of damp and mould, understand why mould grows, and how you can prevent and tackle it.

Damp and mould are not the same thing. The presence of damp can cause mould growth, but it's more common for mould to be caused by condensation forming in our homes.

Did you know...

Mould can't grow without moisture.

A load of washing can produce as much as an extra 7 litres of moisture when dried indoors.

Mould is a fungus that grows from tiny spores that move naturally around the home.

These spores will grow and spread if they have enough moisture and a food source, such as emulsion, wallpaper, and wood. They will appear as the black spots that we associate with mould.

Family of 4 - typical range of moisture production per day (BRE Digest 297)

Activities producing moisture:

Sleeping	1 - 2 litres
2 people active:	1.5 - 3 litres
Cooking:	2 - 4 litres
Bathing / dish washing:	0.5 - 1 litres
Total produced:	5 - 10 litres

Excluding drying clothes inside: 3 - 7.5 litres

Condensation

When warm, moist air touches a cold surface, such as windows, external walls, and areas with little air movement, it can form water droplets called condensation. Condensation can lead to mould growth.

There are 4 main factors that cause condensation, these are:

- too much moisture in the air
- not enough ventilation
- cold surfaces
- the temperature of the home

Common cold spots include:

- external walls
- windows and window surrounds, known as sills and reveals

Keeping your home heated throughout winter will help to prevent cold spots.

The World Health Organisation recommends a minimum internal temperature of 18 degrees Celsius. However, try keeping your home between 19 and 21 degrees Celsius where possible.

Set the radiator valve to 1 in rooms that you are not using. This means there is some heat to take the chill from the external walls and window surfaces.

Close curtains at night to keep the heat in. Open them during the day to allow the sun to warm rooms naturally.

Mould will often grow in areas where there is little air movement, such as:

- in cupboards and wardrobes
- behind furniture
- in corners of rooms

Please ensure you leave gaps for air to flow around furniture and between furniture and walls.

Below are some steps you can take to help reduce moisture in your home:

Dry clothes outside when you can.

If you need to dry clothes indoors, place them in one room such as the bathroom, or on a clothes horse with the door shut and windows open or with the extractor on.

When washing or cooking, keep doors shut and turn extractor fans on for around 20 minutes after you finish. This prevents steam from moving to colder rooms. Leave doors open at other times to encourage circulation.

Keep lids on your pans when you are cooking. This not only reduces the escape of steam but can also save you money by cooking your food quicker.

Wipe down bathroom tiles, baths, and shower screens after use and hang your towels up to dry.

Keep window trickle vents open, and open windows daily for approximately 15 to 30 minutes. It is important to clean these vents and fans to make sure they can work properly, so routinely hoover and wipe them down as part of your cleaning routine.

Open curtains and windows in bedrooms first thing in the morning. Wipe down condensation from window frames and sills with a microfibre cloth.

You can use moisture absorbers in window sills and cupboards to help absorb some of the moisture.

Penetrating damp

Penetrating damp happens when water seeps into a building.

This can happen when:

- the roof or rendering is damaged
- the gutters are blocked
- pipes are leaking or plumbing is damaged
- areas around sinks, showers, or baths are damaged, such as cracked grouting or worn out sealant

Rising damp

Rising damp happens when water rises from the ground through the floor and into the walls of the building.

You can often see rising damp because it leaves a tide mark at the bottom of affected walls.

If you think your home has building defects that could cause damp, or you spot penetrating or rising damp, it's important to let us know as soon as possible.

Damp can cause a lot of damage if you ignore it and result in mould growth

However, it is important to note that cases of rising and penetrating damp are rare, with condensation being the most common cause of mould growth.

Cleaning mould

It's important to clean away mould as soon as you see it and continue to do so regularly.

Fungicidal washes can be used to remove mould and are available from most hardware stores. These should be used as directed by the manufacturer.

White vinegar is a more environmentally friendly and often cheaper way of removing mould. If you are cleaning a large area of mould, use the vinegar neat. For small patches, mix it 50:50 with water and spray it onto the mould.

Let it sit on the mould for 60 minutes before wiping it away. Wipe from the outer edges inwards, which will prevent further spread.

For more difficult patches, mix 1 part white vinegar with 1 part baking soda, mix it to a paste, and apply. Leave for at least an hour, or overnight where possible, before wiping away with a damp cloth.

When you are cleaning mould, you should:

Use protective equipment such as gloves and masks, and ensure the room is well ventilated. However, shut doors to other rooms, which will help to stop mould spores spreading around your home.

Throw away any cloths that you use to clean mould.

Throw away any soft furnishings, such as toys and clothes, affected by mould. Shampoo areas such as carpets.

Clean any mould growth as soon as you spot it.

Take pictures to help track the progress of mould, and inform New Forest District Council if you need to escalate the issue further.

Reporting damp or mould

If you are a New Forest District Council tenant and have damp or mould in your home, you can report it online:

newforest.gov.uk/dampandmould

You can also report it by calling our housing support team on 023 80 285222 or by emailing housing.supporthub@nfdc.gov.uk

When you contact us, we'll need to ask you a few questions. This will help us to assess your case and advise on the next steps.
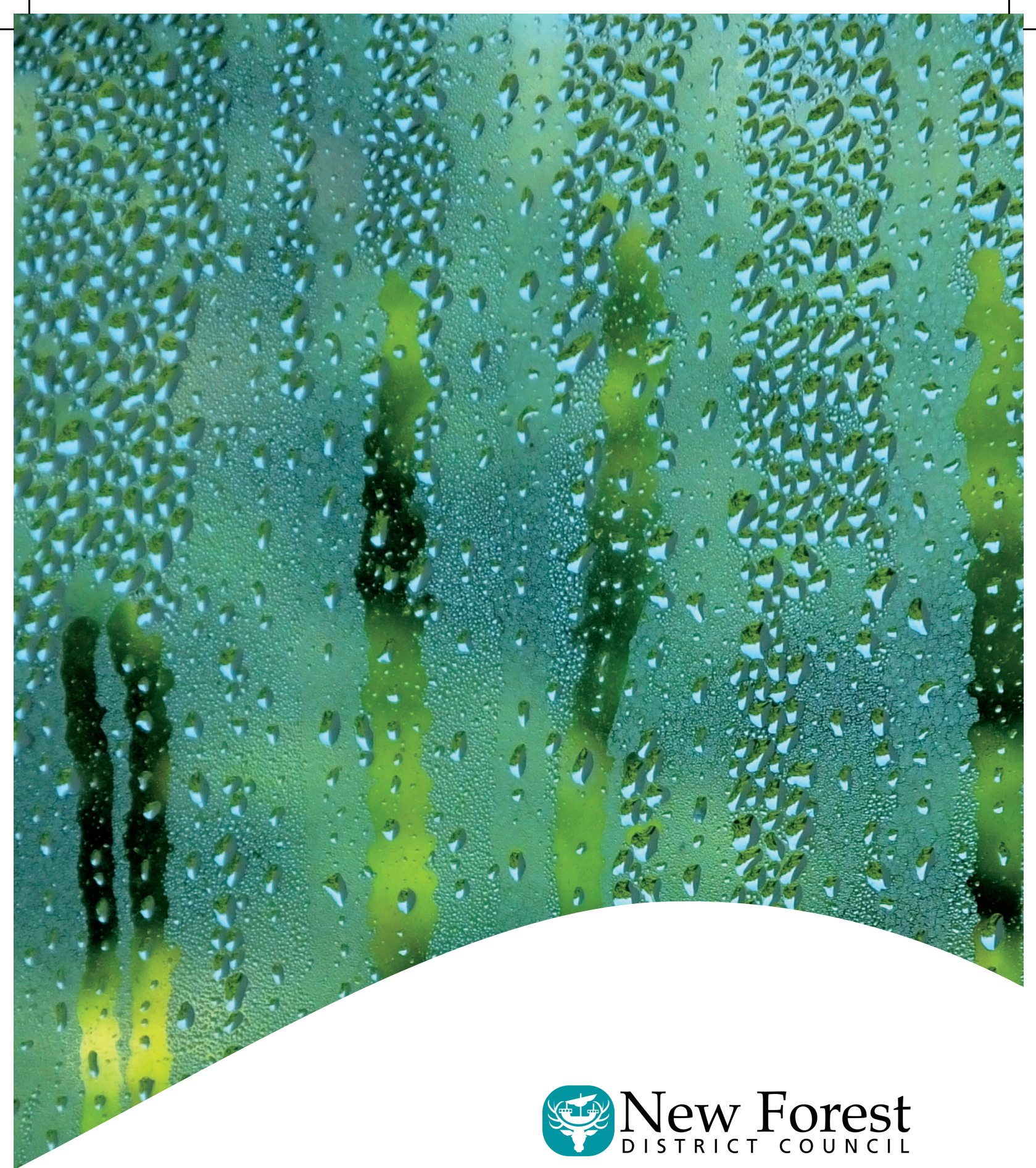
Phone: 023 80 285222 **Website:** newforest.gov.uk/dampandmould