



Mould in homes

More than one-third of all homes in New Zealand have mould issues. Mould is a type of fungi, which can be found indoors and outdoors.

What causes mould?

- Mould thrives in moist conditions. When excessive moisture or water accumulates indoors, mould growth will often occur, particularly if the moisture problem is not discovered or addressed.
- Showers or even cooking can add moisture to the air in your home. The amount of moisture that the air in your home can hold depends on the temperature of the air. As the temperature goes down, the air is able to hold less moisture. This is why moisture condenses on surfaces in cold weather (for example, drops of water form on the inside of a window).
- When mould reproduces it releases tiny spores into the air that can be breathed in. It is these spores that can cause health problems.

Associated health problems

- Inhaling or touching mould or mould spores may cause allergic reactions in sensitive individuals. Allergic responses include hay fever-type symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose, red eyes and skin rash (dermatitis).
- Moulds can also cause asthma attacks in people with asthma who are allergic to mould. In addition mould exposure can irritate eyes, skin, nose, throat and lungs of both mould-allergic and non-allergic people.

How to remove mould

Consult a professional if you have existing respiratory conditions like asthma, emphysema or chronic bronchitis, or if the affected area is large or caused by leaking sewage or other contaminated water.

Follow these steps to remove mould:

- Identify and fix the water/moisture problem.
- Open windows and doors to increase air

circulation into the area you are cleaning up.

- Discard any porous material contaminated with mould (such as carpet, ceiling tiles etc). These items will need to be removed and wrapped before being discarded.
- Spray the affected area with undiluted white vinegar. Access difficult areas (corners) by applying the vinegar with a toothbrush. The vinegar will need time to work, so apply it and leave. In a few days clean up the area with soap/detergent and water using a clean cloth or sponge.
- Alternatively, use 1.5 cups of household bleach to 4 litres of cold water. Apply the solution to the affected area. Leave for approximately 10 minutes and then rinse completely with hot water.

How to prevent mould

Mould will not grow in your home if moisture is not present. If you clean up the mould but don't fix the water/moisture problem then, most likely, the mould problem will return.

Follow these steps to prevent mould:

- Fix leaks and seepage.
- Wipe away excessive moisture build-up on windows and doors.
- Cover dirt under the house with a plastic cover to prevent moisture coming up from the ground.
- Ensure the crawl space is well ventilated.
- Use extractor fans in bathrooms and kitchens to remove moisture to the outside (not into the ceiling cavity).
- Dry clothes outside rather than inside.
- Turn off certain appliances (e.g. unflued gas heaters) if you notice moisture on windows and other surfaces.
- Open windows and doors between rooms during the day to increase air circulation.
- Open curtains to allow sunlight to penetrate the home.
- Ensure adequate heating and insulation.