Yorkshire Housing

# Your guide to preventing damp and mould



# Creating a healthy home needn't be a chore

We've packed this guide with handy hints to help keep your home feeling tip-top. It also explains what happens if there's an issue that we need to come and take a look at.



Just like when someone's feeling under the weather, your home can show signs that something's not quite right - things like damp, mould and condensation.

This guide will help you spot the symptoms and make quick, easy changes to help fix them. Occasionally it can be something more serious and we'll need to come and investigate.



**Need this in another language?**
Scan the QR code or visit yorkshirehousing.co.uk /your-home/your-healthy-home/ and use the Recite Me toolbar to translate the page.





# Keeping your home warm

We know keeping your home warm isn't always easy, especially when energy bills are high. A warm home can help reduce damp, mould and condensation. That's why this guide is packed with simple, low-cost tips to help keep your home warm, dry and well ventilated.

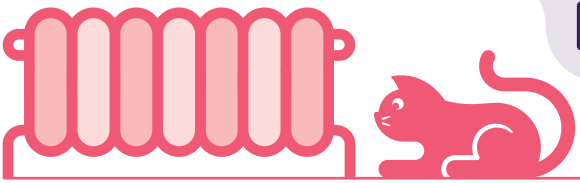
If parts of your home feel unusually cold, are difficult to heat, or you're worried about the temperature in your home, please let us know. It's also important to make sure your heating is working properly and report any faults as soon as possible.

A quick way to save money could be checking your energy tariff. If you haven't reviewed it recently, it may be worth seeing whether a cheaper option is available.

## If you're worried about money, we're here to help

Scan the QR code for our cost of living webpage, or go to www.yorkshirehousing.co.uk/your-home/cost-of-living

Our tenancy coaching team can also offer practical support and advice. Go to www.yorkshirehousing.co.uk/your-home/tenancy-coaching-services



# Symptom: Condensation or high humidity

Noticed a build-up of condensation on your windows, walls or ceilings? Daily activities like cooking, showering and drying clothes indoors add moisture to the air making your home feel stuffy and uncomfortable.

## So, where's all this moisture coming from?

**2 Pints:** Having a bath or shower



**3 Pints:** Two people active for one day



**6 Pints:** Boiling a kettle and cooking food



**9 Pints:** Drying clothes inside



Black mould around the window is usually caused by a build-up of condensation. Keep condensation away by wiping it away with a damp cloth or piece of kitchen towel. If you start to see black mould forming around your windows get in touch with us.

# Top tips:

- Covering pots and pans while cooking helps prevent excess moisture escaping into your home. It also makes things cook faster, saving you time and energy.

- If you're running a bath, add the cold water first. Believe it or not this cuts the amount of steam produced by up to 90%.

- The humidity level in your home should be between 40% - 60%. It can be measured using a hygrometer. High humidity can cause condensation build up which can cause mould. You can buy a hygrometer online for as little as £3.



*Example of black mould forming around a window frame*

# Treatment:



Make sure your **extractor fan is working** and switched on while you're cooking or bathing. It clears away steam and moisture, so leave it running afterwards to finish the job. Most fans have timers or sensors, so they'll turn off by themselves.



When you're **using your hob** make sure you keep pots and pans covered to help prevent excess moisture escaping.



It's normal to see condensation on your windows when it's been **really cold overnight**. Each morning take a couple of minutes wiping it away with a towel or piece of kitchen roll. This helps to prevent black mould from appearing around your window frames.



If your **windows have trickle vents,** keep them open all year round, except in rooms with a working extractor fan.



If your **windows don't have trickle vents** don't worry, open your windows and lock them in the vent position – it'll do the same job.



**Myth buster:** Extractor fans cost very little to run. On average it costs £9.20 a year to run your bathroom extractor fan. That's around 2p a day.

# Symptom: Damp and mould

The good old Yorkshire weather can make it difficult to keep the inside of our homes warm and dry. Cold air can't absorb as much moisture as warm air. That's why things like damp and mould are more common throughout winter. If your home is very cold the moisture that's in the air condenses on colder surfaces creating condensation which can cause damp and mould.

## What to look out for:

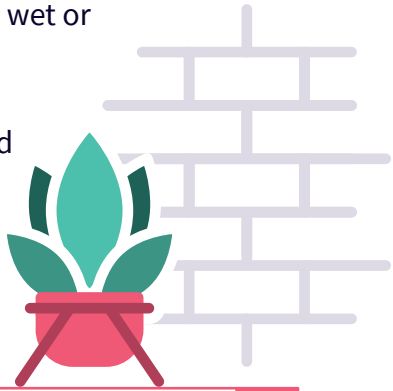
**Black mould:** Black spots or streaks around windows, walls or ceilings are usually a sign of mould. It can spread quickly, so don't ignore it.

**Musty smells:** A damp, musty or earthy smell can be one of the first signs that moisture or mould is building up somewhere.

**Stains or discolouration:** Brown, yellow or dark patches on walls, ceilings or floors can be a sign of damp or water getting in.

**Cold or damp patches:** Walls, corners, cupboards and areas behind furniture that feel cold, wet or damp could indicate a problem.

**Mould in living spaces:** If you spot mould in bedrooms, bathrooms, living rooms or anywhere else in your home, report it to us as soon as possible.



# Symptom: Damp and mould

To report any issue of damp and mould in your home, please call us on **0345 366 4404**.

## Show us the problem

If you report damp, mould or condensation, we might ask if you'd like to hop on a video call to show us the issue so we can understand it more quickly.

It's completely optional, and if you'd rather not, we'll continue helping you as normal.




*We'll support you and make sure your home is safe*

# Treatment:

We recommend you keep your home heated to between **18 and 21 degrees Celsius** and don't let the temperature drop below 16 degrees Celsius for long periods. If you're struggling with energy costs or keeping your home warm, please let us know. You can also find support on our cost of living webpage.

If you spot mould around the edges of your ceiling it could be because your loft insulation has been disturbed, creating **cold spots** where moisture can form. Try to avoid using your loft for storage, and report any issues so we can come take a look.

**Hint:** Warm air holds more moisture than cold air, which in simple terms means that you have reduced humidity levels. Keep your home at a steady temperature throughout winter.



*Example of mould caused by loft insulation cold spots*

# Symptom: Damp or mould on the ceiling

The insulation in your loft helps keep you warm and reduce your energy consumption. It traps the warm air inside your home and stops it from escaping through the roof, a bit like your favourite winter hat!

If the insulation is moved or squashed it stops working properly and cold spots can form on your ceiling. When warm air comes into contact with these cold spots condensation can form and can cause black mould to appear on your ceiling.

If you spot black mould on the ceiling, it's usually because there are cold spots in the loft. It could be because your loft insulation has moved or been disturbed creating cold spots on your ceiling where moisture can form. If you see mould like this, get in touch with us so we can send someone out to investigate and treat the mould.



*Example of a black mould forming on a ceiling*

# Symptom:
# Damage and leaks

Wet and windy weather can expose problems with your home that you might not have noticed over summer.

If there's a problem with your roof, walls or guttering, you're more likely to notice it during winter. Cold temperatures can damage pipes and cause leaks, while driving rain can get through damaged brickwork and blocked gutters can spill onto walls. Damp patches could be caused by leaking pipes or other problems.

If you spot damp patches, get in touch straight away so we can take a look and sort things out. Live in a flat or shared building? If you spot problems with communal windows, gutters, downpipes, roofs or other shared areas, please report them to us too.



*Example of a broken downpipe and gutter leaking water*

# Treatment:

As temperatures drop over winter there's a risk that **pipes can freeze causing a leak**. If your home has an outside tap cover it with a frost protector or isolate and drain the tap to help prevent leaks.

If your home is near a large tree, **leaves can make their way into your gutters**. Eventually they'll become blocked and rainwater can spill over and down onto your walls. If you notice your gutter leaking, get in touch with us.

If you notice any **damp patches on your inside walls** get in touch with us straight away so we can send someone out to take a look and put things right.

## Know where your stopcock is?

Your inside stopcock, also known as stop valve or stop tap, is the easiest way to turn your water on and off. You'll usually find it under the sink and it looks like this.



# Your healthy home checklist

- Don't use Calor gas or paraffin heaters. Not only are these not allowed inside your home, but they also produce a lot of moisture which is released into the air.
- Test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms every week. If your alarm is always beeping it might need a new battery. If you're in any doubt get in touch with us.
- Cover pots and pans when using your hob and keep the kitchen clean to keep pests away.
- Make sure your extractor fan is on while cooking or bathing, and leave it running afterwards. Most fans have timers or sensors, so they'll turn off by themselves. If it's not working, just let us know.
- Make sure your trickle vents are kept open all year round, except in rooms with a working extractor fan.
- If you can't hang clothes outside, hang them in a room with a working extractor fan and keep the window/door closed. Don't hang wet clothes over radiators or doors.
- **Keep it safe:** Only try these tips if it's safe for you to do so. If your health, disability or mobility means you can't safely do something, please let us know. If you notice a problem, please call us and report it straight away.

# What you can expect

Most of the time, a few simple changes can help keep your home healthy. But sometimes a problem needs our help.

New rules under Awaab's Law mean social landlords must respond quickly to certain hazards in your home. Hazards can be classed as emergency or significant, which affects how quickly we need to investigate and take action.

How a hazard is classed depends on the problem, how serious the risk is and your individual circumstances too.

As well as damp and mould, hazards can now include:

- Excess cold and excess heat
- Trip and fall hazards, including on floors and stairs
- Structural collapse
- Fire and explosions
- Electrical hazards
- Domestic hygiene, including personal hygiene and food safety

If something doesn't feel right in your home, don't wait. Report it through my account at **my.yorkshirehousing.co.uk** or call us on **0345 366 4404**.

The next few pages explain the difference between emergency and significant hazards, with examples of each and how quickly we'll respond.

# Emergency hazards

These are hazards that could pose an immediate and serious risk to your health or safety. What counts as an emergency will depend on the problem, how serious the risk is and your individual circumstances. Examples could include:

- Damp and mould posing an immediate health risk
- A home that is dangerously cold or hot
- Trip or fall hazards that pose an immediate risk
- Structural problems or risk of collapse
- Fire, explosion or serious electrical safety risks
- Serious hygiene problems

**If you report a hazard and it's confirmed as an emergency:**



We'll aim to visit your home within 4 hours. If that's not possible, we'll attend within 24 hours.



Where we can, we'll fix the issue and make your home safe during the visit. If we can't fix it there and then, we'll aim to make it safe within 24 hours and book a full repair.



If we can't make it safe within those 24 hours, we'll arrange temporary accommodation for you until it is safe.



If we haven't fixed it within three working days, we'll send you a written summary explaining what we found, what we've done and any remaining work needed.

# Significant hazards

These aren't emergencies, but could still pose a risk to your health or safety if they're not dealt with quickly. We'll consider the problem, how serious the risk is and your individual circumstances. Examples could include:

- Damp and mould that keeps coming back
- A home that is too cold or too hot
- Trip and fall hazards, including on floors and stairs
- Electrical safety issues
- Hygiene problems

**If you report a hazard and it's classed as significant, we'll investigate within 10 days then:**



Make your home safe within **five** working days.



Start any extra repairs needed to stop the problem coming back within **12 weeks**.



If we haven't fixed the issue within **three** working days, we'll send you a written summary explaining what we found, what we've done and any remaining work needed.



Call us on **0345 366 4404** to report a problem with your home or use my account at my.yorkshirehousing.co.uk.

# Disrepair claims

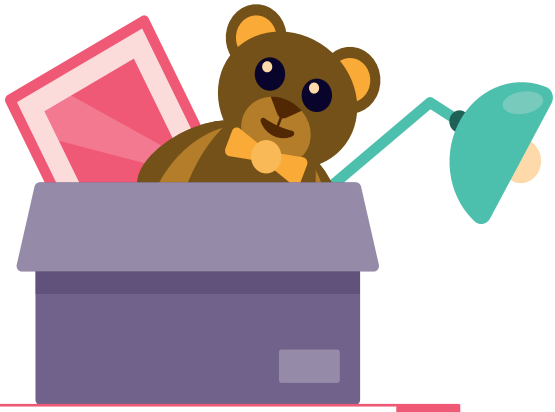
As new laws come into place, you may hear from companies encouraging you to make a housing disrepair claim. While they may promise compensation or quick results, claims can come with costs, contracts and other risks.

If you're thinking about making a claim, talk to us first. We want to help sort problems quickly and make sure you've got the right support. Call us on **0345 366 4404**.

## Are your belongings insured?

If you rent one of our homes, your belongings aren't usually covered by your tenancy agreement. We insure the building, but not the things you own. Contents insurance can help protect your belongings if they're damaged, broken or stolen, so it's worth having your own cover in place.

Find out more by scanning the QR code or visiting **www.yorkshirehousing.co.uk/your-home/insurance**



# Hazards timeline: What you can expect from us



## Emergency hazards
Investigate and complete safety work within 24 hours.

## Significant hazards
Investigate within 10 days.

## Customer communication
Provide written summary within 3 working days of investigation conclusion.

## Safety work
Begin within 5 working days of identifying a hazard. Further works must commence as soon as possible and within 12 weeks.

## Ongoing communication
Keep customers updated throughout the process.

## Risk triage
Use all available information to assess and address hazards within legal timeframes.

# How useful did you find this booklet?

Scan the QR code to complete a survey with a few quick questions and let us know what you found helpful and how we can improve.



## Scan the QR code with your phone camera

**Don't worry,** it'll only take a few minutes of your time to complete!

Yorkshire Housing

**Write to us:**
The Place
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Leeds
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**Telephone:** 0345 366 4404
**Email:** enquiries@yorkshirehousing.co.uk
**www.yorkshirehousing.co.uk**

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