



*A Well*come Home for All

Housing Rights Guide

Stay safe and know your rights
when mould and dampness
take hold of your home

 AllergyUK

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I had to move out of my flat of four years due to mould and mycotoxins, which made me incredibly ill (I was even bed bound at the time). After moving out I quickly regained health. I was staying with friends for over a year until I found a new home that I had more control over.

Adult living with indoor allergies

Purpose of the guide

Who is this guide for?

Living with allergies can be challenging, especially when environmental factors like mould and damp conditions are beyond your control. This guide is designed for individuals who suffer from mould and damp allergies, a condition that affects approximately one in five allergy sufferers.¹ It is particularly relevant for those exposed to mould and damp issues in accommodations not of their choosing, including social housing, private rental properties, temporary accommodations, and shared living spaces.

Many people in these situations face unique challenges due to limited authority to make the necessary changes to improve their living environment. While this guide focuses primarily on mould and damp-related concerns, its information is valuable for anyone worried about mould in their living space, regardless of whether they have a diagnosed allergy to mould, such as individuals with asthma or other respiratory conditions.

Mould and damp allergies

Recent statistics highlight that approximately 4% of the four million social housing units in the UK experience significant damp and mould problems,² with these issues being five times more prevalent in private rental properties.³ Given these figures, understanding the potential health risks associated with mould exposure is crucial, especially for those with allergies or respiratory conditions.

This guide aims to:

- Educate readers about the signs and symptoms of mould allergies
- Provide practical tips for identifying mould in your living space
- Offer strategies for minimising mould growth and exposure
- Outline the steps to take if you discover mould in your accommodation
- Inform you about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant or resident
- Guide you through the process of reporting mould issues to relevant authorities

By equipping yourself with the information contained in this guide, you'll be better prepared to protect your health, advocate for your rights, and ensure a safer living environment.

What is mould?

Mould is a type of fungus that thrives in damp, warm, and humid environments. It reproduces by releasing tiny spores into the air, which can settle on various surfaces and grow into new mould colonies. Mould comes in many varieties and colours, including black, green, white, and grey. While some types of mould play essential roles in nature, such as in the decomposition of organic matter, others can be harmful when they infiltrate our living spaces.



Understanding mould and dampness

What causes mould and dampness?

Mould and dampness often go hand in hand, with excess moisture being the primary culprit.

Common causes include:

- **Poor ventilation:** Inadequate air circulation traps moisture indoors.
- **Leaks:** Faulty plumbing, roof leaks, or damaged gutters can introduce water into the building structure.
- **Condensation:** When warm, moist air meets cold surfaces, it creates ideal conditions for mould growth.
- **Rising damp:** Ground moisture seeping up through walls and floors.
- **High humidity:** This is especially problematic in bathrooms, kitchens, and laundry areas.
- **Flooding or water damage:** If not addressed promptly, damage from flooding or other water problems can lead to extensive mould problems.

Common signs of mould and dampness

Identifying mould and dampness early is crucial for preventing extensive damage and health issues. Look out for these signs:

- **Visible mould growth:** Often appears as discoloured patches on walls, ceilings, or other surfaces.
- **Musty odour:** A persistent earthy or damp smell is often a telltale sign of hidden mould.
- **Peeling wallpaper or paint:** Moisture can cause these materials to separate from walls.
- **Warped wood:** Excess moisture can cause wooden structures to swell and warp.
- **Condensation on windows:** Frequent fogging of windows may indicate high indoor humidity.
- **Dark or damp patches on walls or ceilings:** These can be signs of water damage or rising damp.
- **Increased allergy symptoms:** If you notice your allergies worsening indoors, mould could be the culprit.

Health risks associated with mould and dampness

Exposure to mould and damp conditions can lead to various health issues, particularly for individuals with pre-existing respiratory conditions or weakened immune systems. Potential health risks include:

- **Allergic reactions:** Symptoms may include sneezing, runny nose, red eyes, and skin rashes.
- **Asthma attacks:** Mould can trigger or exacerbate asthma symptoms in sensitive individuals.
- **Respiratory infections:** Prolonged exposure may increase the risk of bronchitis and other respiratory issues.
- **Chronic sinusitis:** Persistent inflammation of the sinuses can be linked to mould exposure.
- **Headaches and fatigue:** Some people report these symptoms when living in mouldy environments.

It's important to note that while not everyone will experience severe health effects from mould exposure, prolonged contact can potentially lead to more serious health complications. Individuals with compromised immune systems, the elderly, and young children are especially vulnerable to health issues related to exposure to mould.

Understanding the nature of mould, its causes, and potential health impacts is the first step in addressing this common household problem. By recognising the signs early and taking appropriate action, you can protect your health and maintain a safer living environment.



Tenant rights and responsibilities

As a tenant, your home should be a safe and healthy environment. When it comes to issues like damp and mould, landlords are legally responsible for ensuring the property is kept in good condition and free from health hazards.

Here's what you need to know about your rights regarding your home's condition and mould-related issues.

By understanding your rights related to your home's condition, you can take the necessary steps to ensure that you and your household are living in a safe, mould-free environment.

Your rights and responsibilities as a tenant

The right to a safe and healthy home

Your landlord is required by law to maintain the property in a condition that does not pose a risk to your health. Mould and damp are more than just nuisances – they can lead to serious health problems, especially for children, the elderly, or anyone with respiratory conditions. If mould or damp appears in your home, your landlord must address the underlying causes, such as poor ventilation or leaks, and carry out repairs to prevent it from reoccurring.

Responsibility for repairs

If damp or mould becomes an issue, it's essential that you notify your landlord or property manager as soon as possible. They are legally obligated to make necessary repairs to stop the problem, which may include fixing leaks, improving ventilation, or repairing insulation. Ignoring these issues could violate their responsibility to provide a safe and healthy, habitable living environment.

Timely response to reports of mould

All landlords are expected to respond promptly to reports of mould or damp. However, new legislation, set to come into effect in **October 2025** and commonly known as Awaab's Law, will impose stricter requirements on social housing landlords to address these health hazards. Under the new law, they will be obligated to investigate and resolve dangerous mould and damp issues within a specified timeframe. While the **exact timeframe for these actions has yet to be determined**, it is anticipated to be outlined in future regulations.

For private renters, the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 also holds landlords responsible for resolving mould issues **caused by structural faults** within a reasonable timeframe. However, as with Awaab's Law, **the term 'reasonable timeframe' is not explicitly defined**.

If there are significant delays in repairs or a failure to take action, tenants have the right to escalate the issue or seek legal advice.

Protection from retaliation

Tenants are legally protected from eviction or retaliation when they report problems like mould or damp. Your landlord cannot legally evict you for requesting repairs or reporting unsafe living conditions. If you feel threatened with eviction after raising these concerns, this could be classified as harassment or an illegal eviction, which can be challenged in court.



What is Awaab's Law?

Awaab's Law was introduced in response to the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, a toddler who passed away due to prolonged exposure to mould in his family's rented home. This incident exposed significant gaps in existing legislation, particularly regarding landlord responsibilities in addressing housing conditions and their slow response to health hazards. In light of these issues, new legislation was drafted, passed by Parliament in July 2023, and is set to take effect in October 2025.

It's important to note that, initially, **Awaab's Law will apply only to social housing tenants. However, discussions are underway to extend its provisions to private renters through revisions to the Renters' Rights Bill in the near future.**

What this means for tenants

The introduction of Awaab's Law places greater responsibility on landlords to promptly address health hazards, especially issues like damp and mould. Under this law, tenants now have clearer and stronger rights when it comes to demanding timely repairs to ensure their homes are safe to live in. If a tenant reports a health hazard, such as mould, the landlord must respond within a strictly defined timeline and take immediate action to resolve the issue. This law empowers tenants to hold landlords accountable and demand safe living conditions without fear of retaliation.

Understanding these rights and new legislation can help tenants live confidently, knowing they are entitled to a safe, secure, and well-maintained home.

What are the new guidelines?

Under Awaab's Law, landlords must now respond promptly to reports of damp, mould, or other health hazards within their properties. The law mandates strict timelines for inspection and repair, ensuring that tenants are not left living in unsafe conditions. circumstances.

The law also includes provisions for regular inspections, especially for high-risk properties, to prevent dangerous conditions from arising in the first place. It encourages a proactive approach to maintaining housing standards and ensures landlords are aware of their obligations.

Landlords' responsibilities

Timely repairs

If your landlord doesn't respond to your written complaint or fails to address the issue within a reasonable timeframe, you may need to take further action.

Maintaining safe homes

Landlords must keep the property free from health risks, including damp and mould, and ensure proper ventilation and structural soundness.

Regular inspections

Regular property inspections are encouraged to catch potential issues before they escalate, particularly in properties with a history of damp or mould.

Communication

Landlords should maintain clear and open communication with tenants, providing updates on the status of repairs and expected timelines for completion.

Tenants' responsibilities

Report issues promptly

As a tenant, you are responsible for notifying your landlord as soon as you notice any signs of damp, mould, or other hazards. Early reporting ensures faster resolution and prevents more serious issues from developing.

Proper ventilation

Tenants are also responsible for maintaining proper ventilation in their homes to help prevent the buildup of dampness. This includes using extractor fans, opening windows when possible, and not blocking air vents.

Routine maintenance

While landlords are responsible for major repairs, tenants are expected to carry out routine maintenance such as wiping down condensation, cleaning ventilation systems, and keeping living areas dry and free from clutter.



When it's time to take action

If you're living in a home with unresolved issues like damp, mould, or unsafe conditions, it's important to know when to escalate the situation. Acting quickly can prevent health risks and further damage. Here's a guide on when to formally contact your landlord and when to consider legal action if the problem persists.



How to take action...

Step one: Write to your landlord

If you've noticed ongoing issues with damp, mould, or other hazards, and informal conversations with your landlord haven't resolved the problem, it's time to escalate the matter by sending a formal written complaint. This step is crucial in documenting the issue and showing you've taken the right steps to address it.

We have a template letter available to help you write a formal complaint to your landlord. This template ensures you cover all necessary points and communicate effectively, making it clear that the issue needs immediate attention.

When escalating to your landlord:

Be clear and detailed

Outline the problem, including where the issue is located, how long it's been there, and its impact on your health or home.

Request a resolution

Politely but firmly ask for an inspection and a timeline for when repairs will be completed.

Provide evidence

Include photos or any evidence of the damage to support your claim.

Step two - When to take legal action

If your landlord doesn't respond to your written complaint or fails to address the issue within the legal timeframe set by Awaab's Law (inspection within 14 days and repairs within 28 days), you may need to take further action.

Before moving forward with legal action, it's often helpful to seek legal advice or contact citizens advice. They can offer guidance on your options and assist with the next steps.

Remember, writing to your landlord is an escalation that shows the seriousness of the issue. If they fail to act, you have the right to protect your health and safety by taking legal measures. Use our template letter to take the first step.

Consider legal action if:

The issue remains unresolved

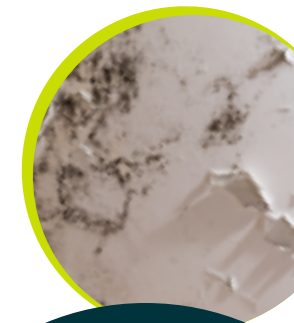
After escalating through a formal written complaint, if the landlord still hasn't addressed the problem, this is a sign that more serious steps are necessary.

Health risks increase

If the unsafe living conditions are affecting the health of you or your family, particularly young children or vulnerable individuals, it's essential to act quickly.

Legal obligations are ignored

If the landlord is failing to comply with Awaab's Law or other legal requirements for repairs and safety standards, it may be time to escalate further.



Managing mould and dampness

As you are aware, dampness and mould in your home can lead to health problems and damage to the property. As a tenant, it's essential to take steps to manage and prevent these issues. Here's how you can improve ventilation, maintain a healthy living environment, and keep mould and dampness under control.



How to improve ventilation

Good ventilation is key to reducing dampness and preventing mould growth. Here are some steps you can take to improve airflow in your home:

Open windows regularly

Allow fresh air to circulate, especially after cooking, showering, or doing laundry. These activities produce moisture, and opening windows helps it escape.

Use extractor fan

In kitchens and bathrooms, make sure extractor fans are turned on during and after use. If you don't have extractor fans, try to open a window or door to allow air to flow.

Avoid blocking vents

Ensure that vents in your home are not obstructed by furniture or curtains. Proper airflow prevents moisture build up.

Dry clothes outside

If possible, dry clothes outdoors. If you must dry them indoors, place them in a well-ventilated room with windows open or use a dehumidifier to help reduce moisture.

Keep furniture away from walls

Leave a small gap between furniture and walls, particularly in corners, to allow air to circulate and prevent damp patches.

Cleaning and maintenance tips

While ventilation helps reduce moisture, it's important to keep your home clean and regularly maintain areas prone to dampness and mould:

Wipe down condensation

Use a cloth or towel to regularly wipe down any condensation that forms on windows, walls, or other surfaces. This simple step can prevent mould from developing.

Clean affected areas

If you spot mould, clean the area with a mixture of water and mild detergent or use a specialised mould cleaner. Always wear gloves and keep the area well-ventilated while cleaning.

Keep surfaces dry

In kitchens and bathrooms, regularly dry surfaces like counter tops, sinks, and tiles to prevent moisture from accumulating.

Check for leaks

Look out for any leaks in your home, particularly around windows, doors, or plumbing. Report leaks to your landlord as soon as possible to prevent long-term damage.



Allergy UK approved products for your home

Allergy UK's endorsement awards indicate that a product or appliance has undergone thorough testing and is proven to benefit people with allergies. The following products, selected from Allergy UK's endorsed product directory, may help those managing indoor allergies.

For the full product directory, please visit: www.allergyuk.org/our-services/allergyuk-products.



Seal of Approval™: For products or appliances that have been independently scientifically tested and proven to reduce indoor allergens or have been clinically tested and shown to be suitable for allergy sufferers.



Allergy Friendly Product Award™: For products which are 'unlikely or less likely to cause a reaction' and 'may be of benefit' to someone affected by allergy, these products are assessed based on their formulation and benefit.



B Sensible Waterproof Bedding

Visit website

RRP: £14.50 -£57.00

Target allergens: Fungi, house dust mite and live house dust mites.



Respro Allergy Mask

Visit website

RRP: £39.99

Target allergens: Dust, grass pollen, dog, house dust mite, mould, mould spores and cat.



Winix Plasmawave Air Purifier

Visit website

RRP: £179.99 - £399.99

Target allergens: Cat, cockroach, dog, fungi, house dustmite, mould, pollen and silkworm.



Bio-Life PetalCleanse, FabriCleanse, HomeCleanse, AirCleanse

Visit website

RRP: £12.95

Target allergens: Cat and dog.



Fill Laundry Liquid and Fabric Conditioner (Unscented)

Visit website

RRP: £6.48 - £7.49 (500ml)

Target allergens: all



THOMAS Aqua Plus Pet and Family Vacuum and Carpet Cleaner

Visit website

RRP: £299.00

Target allergens: House dust mite, cat and dog.

Final advice for tenants moving forward: Staying informed and proactive

As a tenant dealing with mould and dampness, staying informed and proactive is key to maintaining a healthy living environment. Here are the essential takeaways to help guide your next steps:

Know your rights
As a tenant, you are entitled to live in a safe and healthy environment. Landlords are legally obligated to ensure the property is free from damp, mould, or other hazards that could endanger your health. Awaab's Law reinforces this by requiring landlords to act promptly when issues are reported, ensuring quicker resolutions and preventing prolonged exposure to unsafe living conditions.

Document and report issues early
As soon as you notice any signs of mould or damp, report the issue to your landlord immediately. Document everything—photos, written complaints, and any communication with your landlord. Early reporting not only speeds up repairs but also ensures you have evidence should further action be required.

Maintain good ventilation
Although landlords are responsible for major repairs, tenants also play a role in preventing mould and dampness. Keep your home well-ventilated by regularly opening windows, using extractor fans, and ensuring vents aren't blocked. Proper airflow is crucial for reducing moisture, especially after activities like cooking, showering, or drying clothes.

Take preventive action
In addition to ventilation, simple measures like wiping down condensation, cleaning damp-prone areas, and keeping surfaces dry can go a long way in preventing mould growth. Regularly check for leaks and notify your landlord as soon as possible if you find any.

Know when to escalate
If your landlord fails to address the problem within the legal timeframe you have the right to escalate the matter. Consider sending a formal written complaint and seek legal advice if the issue persists.

By staying proactive, communicating effectively with your landlord, and understanding your rights, you can help ensure your home remains a safe and healthy place to live.



We're here to help

Contact our Helpline; Monday - Friday, 9am-5pm

Call us on 01322 619898

Webchat with us at www.allergyuk.org

Email us at info@allergyuk.org



Thank you to the following organisations for their contributions to this resource:



Photo credit: Shutterstock

References:

1. my.clevelandclinic.org - Mold Allergy
2. www.gov.uk - Damp and mould in social housing
3. www.theguardian.com - How harmful is damp and mould in uk homes and who is most at risk

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