Dealing With Mould at Home

⚠ Important Health Warning

If you or anyone in your home has breathing difficulties, asthma, allergies, or a weakened immune system,
speak to your GP before tackling a large area of mould yourself. Mould spores can trigger serious health reactions.
If mould covers more than 1 square metre, or keeps coming back quickly, contact your landlord or local council.

Step 1 — Before You Start: Stay Safe

Always protect yourself before cleaning mould. You'll need:

- Rubber or non-porous gloves
- A face mask — a P2 or FFP2 respirator (not just a paper or cloth mask, which won't filter spores)
- Safety goggles or glasses to protect your eyes
- Old clothing you don't mind getting dirty

Open all windows and doors in the room to keep the air moving. If you have an extractor fan, turn it on.

Tip

Never dry-brush mould. This flicks spores into the air and can spread the problem to other parts of your home, causing breathing problems. Always dampen the area before you touch it.

Step 2 — Choose Your Cleaning Method

You have several options depending on what you have at home and the type of surface:

White Vinegar (Recommended for most walls)

White vinegar is a good household option for mould — it's non-toxic, cheap, and kills around 82% of mould types. Unlike bleach, it soaks into porous surfaces like plaster and drywall to kill mould at the root.

1. Pour undiluted white distilled vinegar (at least 5% acidity) into a spray bottle.
2. If your walls are painted, mix 50/50 with water to protect the finish.
3. Spray directly onto the mould until the surface is thoroughly wet.
4. Leave it to soak for at least 60 minutes — don't rush this step.
5. Gently scrub with a soft brush or sponge, then wipe clean with a damp cloth.

6. Dry the area thoroughly with a clean towel or allow it to air dry with the windows open.

Household Bleach (Non-porous surfaces only)

Bleach works well on tiles, baths, and other non-porous surfaces, but it doesn't soak into plaster or drywall — so it may only remove the visible stain rather than the mould itself.

7. Mix 1 part bleach with 4 parts tap water in a bucket or spray bottle.
8. Apply to the surface, scrub gently, then rinse thoroughly with clean water.
9. Dry the area well afterwards.

> **⚠ Chemical Safety Warning**
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> ⛔ Never mix bleach with vinegar or any ammonia-based cleaner. This produces toxic chlorine gas, which
> is extremely dangerous in an enclosed space. Use one product at a time and rinse well between applications.

Hot Soapy Water

For minor or surface-level mould, or as a final clean-up after using vinegar or bleach, a thorough scrub with hot water and washing-up liquid or sugar soap is an effective finishing step; then dry the area completely.

Specialist Anti-Mould Products

Proprietary fungicidal sprays and washes (available at B&Q, Screwfix, and most DIY shops) are specifically designed to treat and sterilise mouldy surfaces. These are a good choice if the mould keeps returning, or before you redecorate.

Step 3 — Redecorating After Mould Removal

Rushing straight to painting is one of the most common mistakes. If the wall is still damp or the mould hasn't been fully treated, it will come back quickly and cause the paint to peel.

> **Patience Pays Off**
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> If the wall is seriously damp, it may take 1–2 years to dry out fully. Do not hang wallpaper or apply standard paint until the wall has dried to a stable moisture level.

Follow these steps once the mould has been cleaned away:

10. Apply a fungicidal wash to sterilise the surface and kill any remaining spores. Let it dry fully.

11. Check that the wall is completely dry before painting. Use a damp meter (available to hire from tool hire shops) if you're unsure. Just contact Alba Damp Property Consulting.
12. During the drying-out period, use breathable (vapour-permeable) paint or plaster — this lets moisture escape from the wall without damaging the finish.
13. Once the wall is fully dry, apply an anti-fungal or mould-resistant paint. Lime-based and silicate paints are excellent natural options with a high pH that resists mould growth.
14. In bathrooms and kitchens, use anti-fungal wallpaper paste if you are hanging wallpaper.

Do Not Do This

Do not paint or seal over mould. This traps it underneath, and the mould will continue to grow. The paint will bubble and peel, and you'll be back to square one.

Step 4 — Stop It Coming Back

Mould needs moisture to grow. If you don't fix the underlying cause and address the reason for the damp issue, it will return no matter how well you've cleaned and painted. Here's what makes the biggest difference:

Keep the Air Moving

- Always use an extractor fan in the kitchen and bathroom (ideally a continuous-flow with boost type), especially when cooking (use a ducted cooker hood), showering, or running a bath.
- Open windows every day for 15 minutes, even in winter, even if just for a few minutes. This changes the air, releases trapped moisture, and then warm the property.
- If you dry clothes indoors, open a window or use a dehumidifier — drying laundry is one of the biggest causes of condensation mould.

Keep Your Home Warm

- Aim to keep your home at 18–21°C from September to April, especially in bedrooms and living areas.
- A cold wall is much more likely to develop mould — even a small background level of heat (at least 15°C) helps keep wall surfaces above the 'dew point' where condensation forms.
- If budget is a concern, focus heating on the rooms most affected by mould first.

Give Furniture Some Space

- After redecorating, don't push wardrobes, sofas, or shelving units flat against external walls.
- Leave a gap of at least 5–10 cm so warm air can circulate behind furniture. This prevents cold, stagnant air pockets where mould thrives.

Fix Any Water Problems

- Check for leaking pipes, a damaged roof, gaps around window frames, or cracks in external walls.
- On an external wall, damp from outside may be getting in — this is called 'penetrating damp' and will need a qualified Damp surveyor to investigate.

Quick Reference Summary

Task	What to do
Cleaning mould	Use white vinegar (undiluted or 50/50 on painted walls). Leave for 60 mins, then scrub and dry the area.
Safety gear	Rubber gloves, FFP2 face mask, and goggles. Open windows first.
Chemical warning	Never mix bleach and vinegar. Use one at a time only.
Before painting	Apply fungicidal wash. Wait for the wall to dry fully (can take months).
Paint choice	Use breathable or anti-fungal paint. Never paint over active mould.
Prevention	Use continuous flow extractor fans, heat the home to 18–21°C, and leave gaps behind furniture.

Further help: Gov.uk has guidance on damp and mould in rented homes. Your local council environmental health team can also advise or inspect if a landlord is not addressing the problem.

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