

# Tenant and Landlord Responsibilities

## Helping Manitoba Housing Tenants Deal with Mold

The health and safety of our tenants are important to us. Manitoba Housing has tools to help you avoid mold in your home including: the Environmental Office, the Housing Communications Centre, a mold prevention and remediation strategy and mold-prevention seminars for Manitoba Housing staff and tenants.

### ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICE

The Environmental Office staff work with Manitoba Housing tenants to maintain a healthy, safe environment for tenants, visitors and staff. This includes getting rid of mold if it appears in your home and helping you avoid mold.

To contact the Environmental Office, call the Housing Communications Centre.

### HOUSING COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE

Manitoba Housing's Communications Centre is a 24-hour, bilingual call centre for Winnipeg tenants to use when you need to report:

- mold in your home or in common areas of your building
- kitchen and bathroom exhaust fans that are not working properly
- leaking taps, pipes, or toilets
- excess moisture inside your home (ex. cooking, bathing, around windows)
- water leaking in from outside your home
- eaves troughs, downspouts and downspout extensions that are not connected and working properly
- areas of your yard that slope towards the house

**To contact the 24-hour Housing Communications Centre, call 945-8765; toll free at 1-800-661-4663.**

### MOLD PREVENTION AND REMEDIATION STRATEGY

Manitoba Housing has a Mold Prevention and Remediation Strategy that includes:

- annual inspections of all units and common areas of buildings for mold
- getting rid of all significant mold found in Manitoba Housing properties
- renovations to Manitoba Housing properties to ensure adequate air intake and circulation, repairing and replacing roofs, windows and building envelopes to avoid mold

### INFORMATION SESSIONS ON MOLD PREVENTION

- Manitoba Housing will provide mold prevention seminars for all its staff.
- Manitoba Housing also provides information to individual tenants as well as delivering information sessions for groups of tenants – outlining how to create and maintain a mold-free home, particularly in kitchens and bathrooms.

For information or to arrange for Manitoba Housing staff to deliver a session, contact the Housing Communication Centre.

# Tips for Preventing Mold

Manitoba Housing needs your help to create a healthy, mold-free environment. The following tips can help you mold-proof your home.

## GENERAL INTERIOR

- Keep your home well ventilated and use the exhaust fans around the stove and in the bathroom.
- Get rid of any stored items you no longer use. Fabrics, paper, wood and other materials collect dust and hold moisture which can cause mold.
- If you have a heat recovery ventilator (HRV), make sure it's serviced regularly.
- Have family and guests remove their shoes when entering your home.
- Vacuum often. If possible, use a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, to remove dust.
- Clean hardwood floors with a damp mop.
- Remove unnecessary, dust collecting furniture.
- Avoid bringing in any furniture previously stored in a moldy place.
- Reduce the number of house plants you have and inspect the soil in the pots to make sure there isn't mold on the surface.
- Keep furniture, boxes, clothing at least 2-inches away from the exterior wall to ensure adequate air movement.

## BATHROOMS

- Run the bathroom fan while you shower and for a few minutes afterward.
- Keep shower times as short as possible.
- Keep all surfaces clean and dry. Wipe up any standing water on the floor and around the bathroom sink/vanity.
- Keep drains in good working shape by removing debris from them.
- To clean a drain
  - pour a handful of baking soda into it
  - add a cup of vinegar
  - plug the drain
  - let the mixture sit for 20 minutes
  - run fresh water

## KITCHENS

- If you have a fan over your stove that vents outside, use it when you cook.
- Avoid boiling liquids for long periods of time, because it adds to the humidity level.
- Keep drains in good shape. Follow the steps in the bathroom section.
- Pull the refrigerator out to clean the drip pan at the back. At the same time, vacuum dust from the coils at the back of the refrigerator.
- Check for leaks under the kitchen sink.
- Remove garbage daily to prevent odors and spoiling.

## CLOSETS AND BEDROOMS

- Remove any unused, stored items.
- Keep things tidy to improve air circulation.

## BASEMENTS

- Get rid of clothes, paper and furniture stored in the basement. Keep only washable items. Throw out wet, badly damaged or musty-smelling materials. Keep the basement tidy to encourage air flow.
- Store firewood outside.
- Don't use carpets on the basement floor.
- Once in a while, clean the drain in your basement floor by adding a half cup of bleach. Let it stand for a few minutes and then, flush with plenty of water. Keep the drain trap filled with water.
- A dehumidifier helps reduce basement moisture in the summer. Close the basement windows when the dehumidifier is on.

## FURNACES

- Furnace filters need to be cleaned and replaced regularly. Manitoba Housing maintenance staff is responsible for replacing your furnace filter.

## LAUNDRY

- Make sure your clothes dryer is connected to an outside exhaust vent.
- Remove lint every time you use the dryer. Lint build up in a dryer is also a serious fire hazard.
- Avoid hanging wet laundry indoors.
- Wipe your laundry tub and washer dry, after use.

# Detecting and Eliminating Mold

- Mold grows in damp places. It can be black, white or almost any colour.
- Mold often looks like a stain or smudge and can smell musty.
- Look for mold in basements, around/under stored items, in closets, under sinks, on bathroom floors, on walls and on windows.
- Test for mold by carefully dabbing a mold stain with a drop of bleach. If the stain's colour changes or disappears, it is probably mold.
- Mold that covers less than two or three square feet (0.5 to one metre) are considered small, so you can usually clean the mold yourself.
- For larger areas or recurring mold, call the Housing Communications Centre.
- Always wear rubber gloves, safety glasses, a dust mask and a long-sleeved shirt when working around mold.
- If you find mold on a washable surface, scrub the area with soapy water, rinse with a clean damp cloth and then dry quickly.
- Clean moldy drywall with a damp cloth and baking soda or detergent. Do not allow the drywall to get too wet.

