Housing and Residence Life Office  
Tips for Mold and Mildew Prevention and Clean-Up

When outside temperatures drop and the heating season begins, the Housing and Residence Life Office will occasionally receive calls from tenants regarding the appearance of mold or mildew. This information is intended to help you minimize the chance for mold or mildew growth in your apartment.

The University’s Occupational & Environmental Health Specialist has informed us that mold and, more commonly, mildew can be found in every human environment anytime during the year. Each time visible mold or mildew has been found in a University apartment, it has been due to too much humidity from one or more sources: insufficient air circulation, clutter, furniture tight against walls, window condensation, a partially or fully clogged bathroom exhaust fan, overuse of a humidifier, small steam leaks in the heating system, dripping faucets, etc. Those combined with cold winter temperatures on exterior walls meeting the warmth of interior walls create a natural environment for mold and mildew to grow.

The following tips are offered to reduce the likelihood of having mold and mildew grow in your apartment:

1. **Furniture placement** – Make sure that the placement of your furniture allows air to circulate throughout your apartment. Do not place furniture or other items tight against a wall or up against radiators.

2. **Keep tidy** – Piles of clothing or other items can create the warmth necessary for growth.

3. **Keep humidity relatively low** – The best way to minimize growth is to keep the humidity level in your apartment relatively low (30-40%) and to facilitate air circulation.

4. **Use the exhaust fan in your bathroom** – If your apartment unit does not have a fan, make sure the vent (typically located near or in the ceiling) which connects to a fan on the roof of your building is clean and dust-free. This will make sure humidity from your bath or shower dissipates quickly.

5. **Close and latch moveable windows** – This will prevent condensation from forming on the inside window. When only one window is closed the cold outside air allows the warmer, typically more humid inside air to cool against the inside of the glass and form condensation that can then drip down the wall and pool on the floor.

6. **Report leaks and/or dripping faucets** – Report steam or water leaks to our office (227-2620 or housing@nmu.edu) or to your Community Adviser (CA) as quickly as possible. Tenants will not be charged for the repair unless it is determined that the problem was caused intentionally (something that rarely happens).

7. **Remove snow from shoes and boots** – Melted snow from your shoes and boots adds both moisture and humidity to your apartment.

8. **Wipe up spills** – Wipe up any water spills as soon as they happen.

9. **Use a fan** – If you have a small fan, use it to gently circulate the air in your apartment. Stagnant, even moderately humid air can result in mold or mildew growth.

If you see mold or mildew anywhere in your apartment, you should remove it as soon as possible using any household cleaner made to combat mold and mildew. Please use green products when possible. Make sure to read and follow all label directions. **Regular cleaning will help prevent** mildew and mold from forming. Cleaning a plastic shower curtain liner is also relatively easy. Launder in hot water on the gentle cycle with detergent and chlorine bleach, then dry it on low heat for a minute or two until it's dry enough to carry (not dripping), rehang it, and spread out on the rod.

If you have any questions or need to submit a request for additional cleaning, please contact the Housing and Residence Life Office (227-2620, housing@nmu.edu). Thank you.

Written, reviewed & approved by Housing & Residence Life and NMU’s Occupational & Environmental Health Specialist.  
July, 2015