

GENERAL FIX IT TECHNIQUES

POWER AND GAS

Please see the information below for some general tips on keeping your property clean and tidy, keeping it pest-free, and managing minor accidents. For more serious maintenance issues, please see our tenant troubleshooting guide.

MOLD, MILDEW, LICHEN, OR MOSS REMOVAL

Winter damp can bring some unwelcome visitors - slippery paths, shabby roofs, ruined clothes and unsightly paint work. The culprits are mould, mildew, lichen and moss. Here is how to deal with them:

Mold and Mildew are types of fungi. The spores are everywhere, but to grow they need moisture. To help prevent the problem, try the following:

- Use heating to increase the air temperature.
- Most modern homes have extractor fans installed in the bathroom.
- Make sure the air vents in your home's foundations are clear.
- Increase the airflow in your home by opening windows.
- Remove moisture from the air using a chemical moisture absorber or a dehumidifier.

But what about existing mold? There are many products on the market which claim to help, but if you want to save money, use household bleach - possibly in a spray bottle. This uses the same main active ingredient (sodium hypochlorite) as more expensive products. Whichever you use, remember to follow the instructions and test on a small area first.

Moss and Lichen

Slippery moss pathways and steps can be quite a danger. Again, dampness is the cause. To lessen build-up, keep the area clear of dead leaves and other debris, and remove overhanging vegetation. In extreme cases you may want to install drainage alongside the path to catch seeping water.

To remove existing moss or lichen you could use either a water blaster or chemicals. Water blasters are relatively quick - but messy - and can damage asphalt paths and driveways. With chemical treatment, simply apply to the problem area, wait a couple of weeks, then hose off the debris. Domestic disinfectant uses the same active ingredient as some specialist ingredients to assist cleaning.

Perhaps try a supermarket bulk brand with the strongest concentration of alkyl dimethyl benzyl ammonium chloride. When applying try not to splash surrounding plants as this could damage them. Do not mix household chemicals yourself, as this can create poisonous gas.

WASHING MACHINE

Make sure that when installing your washing machine you have spare washers that are required to be inserted into the hoses between the hose and the taps in place. If this is not done the taps will leak and it could be a long time before you are aware of this - resulting in damage to floors and cupboards - very costly.

SCREW IN DOWNLIGHTS

Do not over turn or over screw the light bulb into the downlight fixture. This tends to push the spring tab further back into the fitting which stops the light bulb from making contact. You will need to pull the spring tab back down. Always make sure the power is turned off at the switchboard first.

SHOWER CLEANERS

To clean a glass shower door, sponge with white vinegar. If you apply silicone car polish every few months to your glass shower, and the last person each morning gives it a quick wipe over with a window cleaning squeegee, it will always be sparkling clean.

CLOGGED SHOWER HEAD

Remove metal shower head and boil in half a cup of vinegar and two litres of water for 15 minutes. Plastic shower heads should not be boiled but soaked in equal amounts of hot vinegar and water.

BATHROOM MIRROR

A rub with a cloth dipped in glycerine or in equal parts of glycerine and methylated spirits will help stop a bathroom mirror from fogging. Remove hairspray from mirrors with mentholated spirits.

CARPET CARE

Treat spills immediately. To aid drying, cover with a paper towel, then a folded bath towel, and walk on it.

Carpets are sensitive creatures. DO NOT saturate them with water or chemicals that cannot be washed out. If the backing becomes wet it can create new stains in the carpet, and may also grow mould. *Never use on a carpet any product that has bleach in it as it removes colour.*

Before treating a stain, physically remove as much of it as possible. Blot liquid with a sponge or paper towel. Add lukewarm water, and blot again. Continue until the stain fades.

CANDLE WAX, CRAYON, OR CHEWING GUM

These are easier to remove after being frozen with ice. Treat any residue with an appropriate substance. Apply a clean cloth (rather than directly onto the carpet), and work in from the edge. Don't rub! Afterwards, spray with water and blot with a paper towel. Candlewax can also be removed by heating your iron and placing a tea towel over the wax and ironing until removed totally.

A solution of one teaspoon of wool detergent with one teaspoon of white vinegar in a litre of lukewarm water should remove most stains. Try turps or white spirits on wax, oil and fat. Large or stubborn stains may need professional carpet cleaning.

Some stains permanently change the carpet's colour, and are untreatable. These include dye (hair dye), chlorine bleach, mustard, turmeric, acid and alkaline cleaners, and plant fertilizers.

RED WINE AND BEETROOT

The safest treatment is plain water. Blot with a cloth, add water, and blot again. Repeat until the stain fades.

MINOR SPOTS

Treat with half a cup of white vinegar, mixed with one and a half cups of lukewarm water. Squeeze on the spot, let stand for a few minutes, and blot with a clean, dry cloth. Repeat this.

DEODORIZING CARPET

Mix two parts cornflour with one part borax. Sprinkle liberally on the carpet. Leave for an hour, then vacuum.

ANTS

Here is a little general information about these little invaders. There are ant workers who find the food, feed the babies and organize the nest. The first foragers lay pheromone scent trails to the food and water. Others follow the scent trails.

You need to move and seal any food they are after and swab the trails with diluted bleach, vinegar or detergent. This confuses them. Block any entry points and trails. Diatomaceous powder (crushed plankton) harms ants, and cinnamon, white or cayenne pepper or talcum powder kills them by drying them out. Ants also hate sticky surfaces, so you could affix double sided tape along an ant path. Flood any nests found in pot plants or in walls or paths - the ants will move out.

Rip Cord, which is available from Mitre 10, is another option. You will need to wear protective clothing and a mask for this but it is an effective option for killing ants. Ant bait is also good for destroying an ant nest. The ants take the sweet sticky solution back to the nest.

If you have tried all of the techniques above, and the ants are still not under control, you will need to contact our office, to ask us to send a pest control company to fix the problem.