Why White Mould Appears on Furniture (And How to Stop It)

CUSTOMER ADVICE GUIDE

What is causing it?

White mould on wooden furniture is caused by damp, still air. When a room is left unheated for long periods during the colder months, the air temperature drops and moisture settles onto the cool surfaces of your furniture.

Even if a room does not feel soaking wet, cold, stagnant air holds high humidity. Natural furniture finishes such as wax, oil, and polish—along with everyday household dust—absorb this moisture, creating the ideal conditions for harmless but unsightly white surface mould to grow.

How to clean white mould safely

Before cleaning, take the piece outside or into a well-ventilated area if possible, and vacuum away loose surface spores first using a soft brush attachment (avoid wiping dry mould with a cloth, as this spreads spores and pushes them into the wood grain).

- **External polished, waxed, or lacquered surfaces:** Lightly dampen a soft lint-free cloth with white distilled vinegar (do not soak the wood) and gently wipe away the mould, turning the cloth frequently. Dry immediately with a clean soft cloth. Avoid methylated spirits, surgical spirit, or strong household sprays, as alcohol and harsh chemicals can strip or cloud traditional finishes such as French polish and wax. Once completely dry, apply a light coat of good-quality beeswax furniture polish to restore protection.
- **Internal rough or unpolished surfaces (inside drawers, cupboards, and backboards):** Bare timber absorbs moisture and mould roots more deeply. Wipe down the surfaces with a cloth dampened with white distilled vinegar, or a mild solution of household borax or mild detergent in warm water, then wipe with a clean damp cloth and leave drawers and doors open in a warm, dry room until the wood is thoroughly dry before putting anything back inside.

How to prevent it from coming back

Once the furniture has been cleaned and dried, keeping the room environment steady will stop the mould from returning:

- **Keep a gentle background heat:** Try not to let the room go completely cold over autumn and winter. Keeping a minimum background temperature of around 14°C to 16°C prevents dampness from settling on the wood.
- **Use a dehumidifier:** If you prefer not to heat the room regularly, running a dehumidifier set to around 50% humidity is an easy and cost-effective way to keep the air dry.
- **Allow air to circulate:** Pull furniture 5 to 7 cm (2 to 3 inches) away from outside walls, which get the coldest, so air can move freely behind and underneath the pieces.
- **Ventilate occasionally:** Leave internal doors slightly ajar or keep window trickle vents open so fresh air can circulate rather than becoming trapped.

If the house is left empty

- **Leave internal doors open:** Keeping room doors open helps air circulate evenly throughout the house and stops pockets of cold, damp air from building up (keep any required fire doors closed).
- **Keep the whole house gently aired:** It is best to keep a low, even background temperature across the entire house rather than heating just one room, and leave window trickle vents open so the property can breathe.
- **Leave wardrobes and drawers slightly ajar:** Opening wardrobe doors and chest drawers by an inch or two lets air move inside, protecting bare timber interiors where mould is most likely to settle.

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