

For immediate release

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## Keeping your home healthy in lockdown and beyond

**Covid-19 means most people are spending a lot more time at home. For those who live in cold, damp and mouldy properties it can also mean increased risk to health and wellbeing.**

But spending more time at home is also an opportunity to learn how to help make it a healthier place to live.

BRANZ, the Home Performance Advisor Training Programme, Eco Design Advisor Service and Beacon Pathway have put together some best practice tips to help people keep their homes warm, dry and healthy, now and after lockdown ends.

Mark Jones, leader of the BRANZ *Warmer, Drier, Healthier Homes* research programme says the BRANZ house condition surveys have provided evidence on the condition of our housing stock for over two decades.

“We know that although some progress has been made, a significant number of New Zealand homes still lack adequate insulation or heating and have issues with damp and mould.”

Vicki Cowan, co-manager of the Home Performance Advisor Training Programme says there are key principles to maintaining a healthy living environment.

“Keep the heat in, let the sun in and turn on your heater. Keep moisture out and flush your house with fresh air daily,” she says.

“Think of your home as your car ... you need to know how to ‘drive’ it efficiently and safely and keep it in good working order.”

### **Tips for healthy homes** [Please see attached infographic]

**Keeping heat in**

- Cover windows, ideally with layered or lined curtains or blinds, and close them when it starts to get dark. People can also improvise with things like towels, blankets or duvets.
- Any opening to the outside – e.g. a badly sealed window, a door with gaps, or an open disused chimney – will be letting heat out. Block up holes and draughts if possible, using rolled up old towels, or even newspapers.

### **Managing moisture**

Showering, cooking, washing up and even breathing produce a lot of moisture and can lead to dampness and mould.

- If available, always use rangehood and extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom when cooking, showering or bathing. They should be run while people are cooking or washing, and for a good 10 minutes afterwards, to ensure the room is clear of moisture.
- When cooking keep lids on pots and pans.
- Opening a window wide also helps let the moisture out. Wipe up condensation daily and dry the cloth outside so that the moisture is out of the house.
- Drying clothes indoors is another major source of moisture. It's not always easy for people working away from home to hang washing outside so now's the time to do it - see what difference it makes and create a new habit.

### **Ventilation**

- Lockdown means it's even more important to give homes a good airing out. BRANZ research shows that opening a window or door wide for 10 minutes is far more effective than leaving a window open a tiny bit for a long time (which makes the house cold). A blast of fresh air twice a day will get rid of unwanted moisture.

### **Heating**

As winter approaches, the need for heating will be greater. We know many households lack efficient heat sources in living areas, and at least half of us don't have or use any heating in bedrooms. But maintaining a healthy indoor temperature – at least 18°C in any occupied areas of the home – is really important for our health. A warmer home is also less likely to have problems with moisture.

- When it's sunny, open curtains to let in that free heat.
- Clean heat pump filters (makes them work better) and run heat pumps at 18-22°C but no higher as they are less efficient (cost more) when run at high temperatures.
- Use whatever heating sources are available except unflued gas heaters which release moisture and harmful gases into the home.

### **Who to contact for help**

Independent home performance advisors: [https://www.beaconpathway.co.nz/further-research/article/find\\_a\\_home\\_performance\\_advisor](https://www.beaconpathway.co.nz/further-research/article/find_a_home_performance_advisor)

Eco Design Advisor Service: <https://www.ecodesignadvisor.org.nz/resources/>

EECA: <https://www.energywise.govt.nz/at-home/simple-ways-to-lower-energy-bills/>

EECA Warmer Kiwi Homes grants: <https://www.energywise.govt.nz/tools/warmer-kiwi-homes-tool/>

Energy rating labels: <https://www.energywise.govt.nz/energy-labels/energy-rating-labels/>

Tenancy Services <https://www.tenancy.govt.nz/healthy-homes/>

Search for Curtain Bank by region (check the criteria households may need to meet to get curtains, e.g. low income, respiratory illness).

Consumer NZ: <https://www.consumer.org.nz/> (some content behind member paywall)

## **For more information please contact**

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## **About BRANZ**

BRANZ is an independent research organisation providing impartial, evidence-based advice to industry and government on critical issues in building and construction in New Zealand.

## **About Beacon Pathway**

Beacon Pathway researches how to make New Zealand homes warmer, drier and healthier.

## **About the Home Performance Advisor Training Programme (HPA)**

HPA is a not-for profit initiative that provides training for professionals and volunteers helping householders to make their homes warm, dry and energy efficient.

## **About the Eco Design Advisor Service**

Eco design advisors work for local councils to help improve the comfort and health of New Zealanders by providing free independent advice on home performance.