

Condensation

Condensation and mould growth affects millions of residents, tenants and homeowners and it can occur in both new and old homes. Condensation can be frustrating but it is important to understand the causes and ways of reducing condensation in your home.

What is condensation?

The air inside your home contains a certain amount of water which is increased by the things we do on a daily basis. Through the daily routine of showers, baths, boiling kettles, cooking etc. a family of 4 will, on average, contribute approximately 4 pints of water per person a day, producing over 100 pints of water vapour per week; this moisture has to end up somewhere!

Condensation is formed when excess warm moisture in the air (steam or water vapour) meets a surface cooler than itself such as walls, woodwork and windows. When this happens the vapour becomes water and whilst this can run off surfaces such as glass or painted surfaces it is likely to soak in to porous surfaces such as walls and ceilings.

There are three main causes of condensation:

- Too much moisture
- Too little ventilation
- Cool temperatures.

Do not confuse condensation with rising damp as these are very different.

Rising damp carries salt from the ground. Salts kill mould by extracting moisture from it; therefore if you have mould in your home you do not have rising damp.

What are the effects of condensation?

If the water soaks into walls, ceilings or untreated woodwork, it will cause mould to grow. Mould is not only unsightly but the spores it releases can also have ill effects on your health.

How to reduce condensation

Simple things can help reduce condensation in your home, and so prevent damp and mould. Reducing moisture, alongside ensuring there is adequate heating and ventilation are key factors. This is important not only in bathrooms and kitchens where steam produced by washing and cooking poses a high level of threat, but also in other rooms where poor airflow in corners and behind furniture may cause condensation to form.



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Reduce moisture:

- Always use extractors if you have them. If not, open your windows a little whenever possible.
- Hang washing outside to dry. If it has to be hung inside, hang it in the bathroom, close the door and open a window slightly or put the extractor fan on.
- Don't put washing on radiators.
- Cook with pan lids on and don't overfill the saucepan.

Increase ventilation

Some ventilation is needed to let the air circulate. Take care however not to over-ventilate in cold weather. It will make the home colder and make condensation more likely. It will also increase heating costs. Ventilating for at least 30 minutes a day will replace moist air with dry air from the outside; opening a small window at either end of your property or one upstairs and one downstairs will do this. You should also:

- Decrease clutter.
- Do not push furniture up against walls.

Keep it warm

Cold walls and surfaces encourage condensation to form so keeping the home warm will help to control it. So try to keep some heating on all day in cold weather, even at a low level.

Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. If you don't have heating in every room, keep doors of unheated rooms open to allow some warm air in. You could also use oil-filled radiators or electric panel heaters on a low setting – however, electricity is expensive.

Treating mould

Where condensation problems have been neglected and mould has begun to form:

- Treat any mould already there by wiping down and spraying walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash. Follow the instructions for using it safely.
- Don't try to remove mould with a brush or vacuum cleaner, as this will make spores airborne and spread them further.

You are responsible for cleaning any mould growth due to condensation.

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