



A guide to Condensation and mould growth

Advice to tenants and homeowners

Damp can cause mould growth on walls, furniture and clothes. It can also cause window and door frames to rot. Damp also encourages the development of house dust mites which, along with mould growth, can increase the risk of respiratory illness.

Dampness in the home may be caused by a number of things but most frequently it is caused by condensation. This leaflet explains how condensation forms and how you can keep it to a minimum, therefore reducing the risk of dampness and subsequent mould growth.



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What is condensation?

Condensation is a type of dampness which occurs when air that contains a lot of water vapour cools when it comes into contact with a cold surface. You see water vapour when you exhale on cold days and this is much the same thing.

Condensation occurs mostly during cold weather and appears in areas of your home where the air doesn't move about very much (for example in a spare bedroom rather than a hall or a lounge). You will find it on windows, some wall surfaces and in or behind cupboards or wardrobes. It can also form on walls that are north facing.



But is it condensation?

Not all damp is caused by condensation. Damp can also come from:

- Leaking waste pipes and overflow pipes
- Rainwater that seeps through a roof where a tile or slate is missing, or that comes from a blocked gutter
- Rising damp, where there is no damp course on your house, or where the damp course is not working properly

These three types of damp often leave a 'tidemark'. If you do not think that the damp in your homes comes from any of these sources, it probably is condensation.

How to minimise condensation?

You need to produce less moisture to reduce the amount of condensation in your home. You can do that by:

- Covering boiling pans of water in the kitchen
- Avoiding the use of paraffin and portable gas heaters
- Drying your washing outdoors (if it's possible) or in a bathroom with a window open
- Making sure your tumble dryer (if you have one) is vented to the outside of your property using a proper vent kit. You could also use a self-condensing type of dryer

Ventilate to remove moisture

- Keep a small window, or trickle ventilator open when the room is in use
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when you are using them
- Fit a humidistat controlled fan, ideally one that will operate automatically at a set humidity level. These are cheap to run and are effective

Note that humidity is measured on a scale of 1-100 and is defined as the amount of water vapour in the atmosphere.

Keep your home warm

- Heat your home at low levels for a long time rather than high levels for short periods, as this will ensure that there are as few cold surfaces as possible in the home
- Consider keeping the heating on low even when there is no one actually there
- Heat your home using a dry heat source such as gas central heating, electric storage heaters or a fitted gas fire. Portable gas heaters and paraffin increase the risk of condensation
- Insulation and sensible draught proofing will help you to keep your home warm and will also help you to cut your fuel bills

Dealing with mould growth

Try these ways to deal with the growth of mould:

- Try to ensure that condensation does not occur in your home on a regular basis
- As bleach only provides a temporary solution, wash mould on washable surfaces with a fungicide solution that you can buy from any DIY store and follow the instructions on the product
- Wash or dry clean materials and fabrics that are affected by mould. This will remove the mould, though it may not always remove the stain left by the mould
- Do not brush or vacuum clean the mould if you suffer from respiratory problems as this can increase their effects

For more information

For more information on the availability of grants or loan schemes to help improve insulation and energy efficiency in the home, please contact the council's customers, homes and property team.

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