



Controlling Condensation and Mould



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Introduction

We have produced this useful guide to help you understand and manage condensation in your home. The effects of condensation and mould growth are unpleasant and can cause health problems, so we would encourage you to treat any initial signs of mould as soon as they appear to prevent it from spreading. By following the advice in the leaflet, you will create a better environment in your home and reduce the likelihood of mould growth.

What is condensation and mould?

There is always moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If air gets cold, it cannot hold all the moisture produced by everyday activities and some of this moisture appears as tiny droplets of water, most noticeable on windows on a cold morning.



This is condensation.

Condensation is caused when water vapour comes into contact with cold surfaces and condenses to form dampness or water droplets.

Air can contain varying amounts of water vapour and warm air can hold more than cold air. When warm air comes into contact with a colder surface, it cools down and can't retain the same amount of water vapour.

The excess water vapour is released and forms condensation.

Dampness from condensation often causes the growth of black mould on walls and other cold surfaces such as tiles.

The first signs of mould are usually black spots and a stale smell. This is often incorrectly reported as damp. The problem can be avoided if you take some simple steps.

Condensation in the home

Normal daily activities (such as taking showers and baths, washing and drying clothes, cooking and boiling kettles) produce warm air containing a large amount of water vapour. If the warm air can't escape through an open window or air vent, it moves around until it finds a cold surface where it cools and forms condensation.

Homes that are heated intermittently are more likely to suffer with condensation problems than homes that are heated continuously. This is because continuous heating keeps the surfaces of the rooms warm, which reduces the risk of condensation forming on them.

Condensation is most likely to appear on windows, colder parts of walls, around external door and window openings and where ceilings and floors meet with outer walls. It can also appear in areas where air circulation is restricted, such as inside cupboards and behind furniture that is placed against an outside wall.



If condensation keeps reoccurring in the same place, it can sometimes cause black mould growth.

How much water vapour is produced?



5L
Drying clothes inside



1.5L
Having a bath or shower



1.5L
Washing the dishes



3.5L
Cooking without the lid

Reducing condensation

You're unlikely to prevent condensation in your home completely, but you should aim to reduce it to a level so that it doesn't cause problems. The following advice should help you to achieve this.

Produce less moisture

Put lids on saucepans while you're cooking to reduce the amount of steam.

Avoid drying laundry on a clothes airer or radiator. If you need to dry clothes indoors, open the window and close the door of the room where the clothes are drying so that moisture can escape outside rather than circulate around your home.

If you use a tumble drier, make sure it's properly vented to an open window or one of the new condensing types.

Stop moisture spreading

While cooking, bathing or washing, use an extractor fan and/or open a window and keep the door closed. Keep the extractor fan on and/or the window open for about 20 minutes after you have finished (with the door closed).

When condensation appears, wipe it away.

Ventilate moisture away

Leave trickle vents (slotted vents in the window frames) open when rooms are occupied – even in the winter when your heating is on. These vents provide constant ventilation which removes water vapour.

If you can, put free-standing wardrobes and other furniture against internal walls and leave a gap between the wall and the furniture so that air can circulate around the room. Try not to overfill cupboards, wardrobes and drawers so that air can circulate around the contents.

Provide even heating

Keep your home warm to avoid cold surfaces and remember that it can take a long time for a building to warm up.

If your home is unoccupied during the day, make sure the timer is set so that your home is warm by the time you return. During very cold weather it's better to leave the heating on during the day to maintain an even temperature. The temperature can be set a few degrees lower while you're out and turned up when you return.

You should keep all of the rooms in your home heated to avoid cold areas.

It's better to keep all rooms heated to a low temperature than to have some rooms heated to a high temperature while others have the heating turned off.

Treating mould

If you notice mould growing in your home, you should treat it straight away to stop it from spreading and causing more damage to your home.

Prepare a bucket of warm soapy water using some mild detergent, such as washing up liquid and some cloths that can be thrown away after removing the mould. Carefully wipe the mould off the wall surface with the soapy cloth. Take a dry cloth to wipe down and remove the moisture

following the cleaning process. After this, you should throw the cloths away.

If the treatment appears to have been successful, you can carry out any necessary redecoration. If painting, use a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould, but remember that this won't be effective if it's later covered by ordinary paint or wallpaper. If wallpapering, use a paste containing a fungicide to prevent further mould growth.

If washing with soapy water is not working, you can sterilise the affected area with a suitable fungicidal wash (available from most DIY stores), following the manufacturer's instructions.

Dry clean your clothing or carpets if mould or mildew is growing on them. Don't disturb mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning, as you can increase the risk of respiratory problems.

To prevent mould returning, make sure that you control condensation in your home.

Report a damp problem to your landlord

If you try to get rid of the damp and mould using the suggestions in our 'Treating mould' section and this doesn't work, you will need to let your landlord know about the problem as well as any:

- repairs needed
- impact on your health
- damage to furniture and belongings

Make sure you follow up an initial phone call or email with a letter, as this will show evidence contact was made with the landlord regarding the problem.

What your landlord should do about damp

If the damp is caused by an underlying repair issue, your landlord should arrange for repairs to be done within a reasonable time.

Examples of problems your landlord must fix include:

- leaking internal pipes
- missing roof tiles or faulty guttering
- cracked walls or rotten window frames

Your landlord should also replace any damaged plaster, skirting boards or flooring and redecorate if needed once the problem is fixed.

Deal with condensation

The landlord must repair anything that is causing a condensation problem, for example, a broken heating system or faulty extractor fan.

In the event the problem is not resolved through repairs, your landlord should consider taking a look at the:

- heating
- insulation
- ventilation

The works required from the landlord depends on how bad the problems identified are. Landlords sometimes provide dehumidifiers rather than make expensive improvements.

Damp proofing

Damp proof courses can prevent rising damp developing.

Landlords must arrange repair or replacement of an existing damp proof course that isn't working and make good any damage caused by the damp.

If your home doesn't have a damp proof course, your landlord may have to install one if rising damp causes ongoing problems which need repeated repairs.

What to do if your landlord does not address the problem

If you have a severe case of condensation in your home, which doesn't improve following the guidance in this leaflet and you have reported to your landlord who has not remedied the problem, complete our condensation form online: www.dacorum.gov.uk/condensation-report