

Keeping your home free from damp and condensation.

Is your home damp?

Damp can cause mould on walls and furniture and can cause timber window frames to rot.

Damp housing encourages the growth of mould and mites, and can increase the risk of respiratory illness.

Some damp is caused by condensation.

This leaflet explains how condensation forms and how you can keep it to a minimum, thus reducing the risk of dampness and mould growth within your home.

What is Condensation?

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water appear. People can create additional moisture in their homes by;

- Cooking or boiling water
- Taking baths or showers
- Drying clothes indoors

This is condensation.

You notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath or shower.

Condensation mainly occurs during cold weather, whether it is raining or dry, it does not leave a 'tidemark'. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air.

Look for it in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards.

It often forms on north-facing walls.

Is it Condensation or Damp?

Condensation is not the only form of damp. It can also be caused by;

- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows
- Rain penetrating through the roof where a tile or slate is loose or missing
- Water spilling from a blocked gutter
- Water penetrating around window frames
- Leaking through a cracked pipe
- Rising damp due to a defective damp-course or because there is no damp-course

These causes of damp often leave a 'tidemark'.

If your home is damp for any of these reasons it may take weeks of heating and ventilation to dry out.

If you do not think the damp comes from any of these causes, then it is probably condensation.

How to avoid Condensation

The steps below will help you reduce the condensation in your home.



1. Produce less moisture

Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly. You can reduce this by;

- Cover pans when cooking and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Avoid using paraffin heaters and portable flueless bottled gas heaters as these heaters put a lot of moisture into the air.
- Dry washing outdoors on a line, or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or extractor fan on.
- Vent any tumble dryer on the outside, unless it is the self condensing type.



2. Ventilate to remove moisture

You can ventilate your home without making draughts.

- Keep a small window ajar or a trickle/spinner vent open when someone is in the room.
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by opening the windows wider or where installed, use a humidistat-controlled electric extractor fan or conventional electric extractor fan. Humidistat fans are designed to come on automatically when the air becomes humid.
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors when the rooms are in use, even if either has an extractor fan fitted. The kitchen door should be fitted with a door closer. This will prevent moisture reaching other rooms, particularly bedrooms, which are often colder than other rooms and are more likely to suffer from condensation.
- Ventilate wardrobes and cupboards and avoid putting too many things in them as this stops air circulating.



How to avoid Condensation - Continued



3. Insulating, draught proofing and heating your home

Insulation and draught proofing your home will help in keeping your home warm and will also help to cut fuel bills. When your whole home is warmer, condensation is less likely to occur.

- Fit draught proofing to the windows and external doors of your home. But do not draught proof a room where there is a cooker or fuel burning heater, for example where there is a gas fire. Do not draught proof windows in the bathroom or kitchen.
- In cold weather, keep a low background heating on all day, even when there is no one home.

4. What not to do

- Do not block permanent ventilators
- Do not draught proof rooms where there is condensation or mould

5. What to do to stop condensation forming

You will need to take the steps mentioned previously to deal with condensation in the long term but there are some simple measures you can undertake right away.

- Wipe down windows and sills and other surfaces where condensation forms on a regular basis
- Wring out the clothe used rather than dry it on a radiator.

→ Did you know?

- Washing clothes produces 1 pint of moisture
- Drying clothes produces 10 pints of moisture
- Cooking by gas for 3 hours produces 3 pints of moisture

Steps to take to tackle mould



- First treat any mould you may already have in your home. If you then deal with the basic problem of condensation, the mould should not re-appear.

To kill and Remove Mould;

- Wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash, which carries a Health and Safety 'approval number'. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely
- Dry-clean any mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.
- Disturbing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk of respiratory problems.
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to prevent mould re-occurring. Again, follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely.
- The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould is to eliminate dampness.