



## **Housing & Neighbourhoods Service**

# **Damp and Condensation**

Advice on how to prevent condensation

# Dealing with condensation in your home

This leaflet explains what condensation is, why it occurs and why it is so important to minimise it in your home.

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# What is condensation?

**Condensation dampness is a condition that affects millions of homes in the UK and is particularly common in houses which are poorly heated and insulated and usually gets worse in winter.**

## What causes condensation?

There will always be moisture in the air, even if you can't see it. You will notice it when the mirror mists over after having a bath or when you can see your breath on a cold day. Warm air can hold more moisture than cold air, and so when warm air hits a cold surface, such as a wall or window, it is unable to keep holding all the moisture, and releases some in the form of tiny water droplets.

## Where does it occur?

Condensation appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. As well as finding it on windows and walls, it will also appear in corners and in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. North facing walls are often affected the most, as they are usually the coldest.



Condensation on a window pane

# How much moisture do we produce at home?

Even our breathing produces moisture. One person asleep adds ½ pint of water to the air overnight and twice as much when active during the day.

To give you an idea of how much extra water this could be in a day, here are a few examples:

- 2 people at home for 16 hours produces 3 pints
- A bath or shower produces 2 pints
- Drying clothes indoors produces 9 pints
- Cooking and use of a kettle produces 6 pints
- Washing dishes produces 2 pints
- Bottled gas heater (8 hours use) produces 4 pints

## Why does condensation need to be kept to a minimum?

Dampness from condensation often causes the growth of black spot mould on walls and other cold surfaces such as tiles and sealants around sinks, baths and windows.

Black spot mould and mildew can also grow on furnishings, curtains and even clothes in wardrobes. It may first appear in corners or behind cupboards, but it can spread across entire walls and cause damage to the structure of the building.



Steam from a boiling pan

# How can I minimise mould and mildew?

To reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items:

- Allow air to circulate around them
- Try to keep gaps around large furniture
- Keep furniture away from external walls
- Ensure cupboards and drawers are not full as this will restrict air flow

Black spot mould on washable surfaces can be removed by wiping down with detergents or specialist mould removers. It can be washed out of fabrics, but may leave stains or spoil colours. If cleaning products are used ensure that you always adhere to the manufacturer's instructions for their safe use.

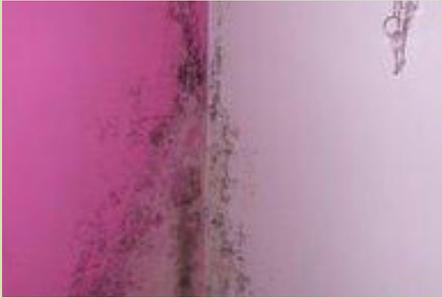
# Examples of areas most affected by condensation

**Is there black mould in cold corners?**



Condensation is the main cause of black mould. More than half the homes in the UK suffer some condensation problems.

The mould grows on the coldest corners in the home. Outside corners and the corners of ceilings are most affected but with condensation mould can grow anywhere.



### **Is there black mould on skirting boards?**

The photo shows a typical pattern of mould affecting the wall in the coldest areas. The shape of the black mould mirrors the temperature of the wall surface.



### **Does your furniture look like this?**

This is a classic condensation symptom. Cold damp places are perfect for moulds and fungi to thrive. There is no known reason for this symptom other than condensation.

Move furniture away from cold outside walls where possible.



# The DOs and DON'Ts of reducing condensation

All houses are affected by condensation. Certain household activities produce large amounts of moisture, but making small changes to the way you do things can greatly reduce the amount of moisture being produced.

## DO

- Vent tumble dryers to the outside of your property, unless it is the self-condensing type
- Dry washing outdoors on a line, or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or the fan on
- Avoid using paraffin and portable flueless gas heaters
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when they are in use, even if there is an extractor fan
- Increase ventilation by keeping window and vents open
- Ensure there is a space between the back of wardrobes and the wall, and avoid positioning in front of exterior walls
- When cooking, open windows in the kitchen or use an extractor fan if fitted
- Cover saucepans while cooking and do not leave kettles boiling, thereby reducing steam
- Wipe down surfaces affected by condensation regularly, to prevent black spot mould growth. Black spot mould can be removed by washing the surface with a disinfectant
- Keep temperatures in all rooms above 15°C as this will reduce condensation forming on external walls
- Keep window vents open where and whenever possible
- Wipe and dry windows and window sills every morning to stop water evaporating onto your furnishings

## DON'T

- Dry clothes on radiators
- Use portable heaters which burn paraffin or gas
- Close vents on the windows
- Place furniture or boxes against walls
- Block up air vents
- Keep the doors open from kitchens and bathrooms when cooking or washing
- Let the temperature drop in the home below a comfortable level or 15°C
- Get water on the floor in the bathroom when washing or showering

## We can help

If you have a problem with mould growth you can contact us for advice and to arrange an inspection. Contact the Repairs Service Centre on **0114 273 5555** or call in at your nearest Area Housing Office or First Point.



## The difference between damp and condensation

Damp occurs when a fault in the buildings' basic structure lets in water from the outside. There are two types of damp - penetrating damp and rising damp.

**Penetrating damp** occurs if water is coming in through the walls or roof (for example, under loose roof tiles) or through cracks in the external structure.

Penetrating damp shows as a wet patch and will not have any mould growth.

These pictures show water coming into the property where there is an external problem.



Penetrating damp shows as a wet patch and will not have any mould growth

**Rising damp** occurs if there is a problem with the damp proof course. This is a barrier built into floors and walls to stop moisture rising through the house from the ground. The damp creates a 'tide mark' on the walls that shows how high it has risen.

If you think that you are suffering from either rising or penetrating damp, contact us for advice and an inspection. Contact the repairs service centre on **273 5555**, or call in person at any Neighbourhood Office or First Point.



Rising damp is affecting the paint finish causing it to bubble.



Rising damp shows as a water mark rising up the wall from under the floor.

# Contact Housing Services



**Phone:** Call Centres 0114 293 0000  
0114 205 3333  
Repairs 0114 273 5555



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