

CONDENSATION, DAMP AND MOULD

Condensation can be the biggest cause of damp and mould in homes.

Failure to treat damp will often result in mould forming which is harmful to health.

Water in the air occurs naturally but is normally not seen. When there is a lack of movement in the air it releases moisture and droplets of water, resulting in condensation.

Reducing excess moisture via ventilation will ultimately also reduce the risk of damp and mould forming.

Top Tips

- Wherever possible, avoid drying washing indoors. If drying inside, use a confined, ventilated space.
- Keep bathroom doors shut when using a shower or bath and use an extractor fan. Once finished, open the window to let steam out. Doors to kitchens should also be kept closed while cooking with ventilation or an extractor fan running.
- When a house is warmer you are less likely to have condensation issues. Avoid heating just one or two rooms.
- Cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling.



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What is condensation?

There is always some water in the air, even if you can't see it. If the air gets colder, or warm moist air contacts cold surfaces, the air releases its moisture and tiny droplets of water appear. This is condensation.



Condensation on a window with mould forming on the windowsill

When does condensation occur?

Condensation can appear in houses on colder wall and window surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air, such as behind beds, kitchen cupboards and the corners of rooms. It usually occurs when a lot of moisture that can't escape has been produced.

Condensation often occurs when cooking, having a bath or shower, washing clothes or drying them inside the home. Additionally, after a cold night bedroom windows can mist up with condensation.

Why is condensation a problem?

The water formed by condensation can be a problem to your home and your health. Moisture encourages rot in wooden objects like doors and window frames and spoils decorations and furnishings. It can provide the ideal conditions for mould growth and mildew which causes black patches on walls and fabric.

Severe mould growth can make asthma and other respiratory illnesses worse due to the inhalation of mould spores.



Condensation mould in the corner of a room exposed after furniture removed.

Reducing excess moisture

- Reduce steam by covering pans and not leaving kettles boiling. When possible, do not dry washing indoors.
- Vent tumble dryers using proper vent kits or use a self-condensing type.
- Wipe and dry any condensation that may have occurred on windows.

Ventilate to remove moisture

When you are doing something that puts moisture into the air, think about ventilation. In most cases, you can get rid of damp air by simply opening the windows.



Keep your house warm

Remember when the house is warmer, condensation is less likely to occur.

If your home has cavity walls, consider installing cavity wall insulation.

Grants for installation may be available.

You can discourage condensation on the walls by insulating them effectively with insulating plasterboard.

If possible, heat the whole house rather than just one or two rooms. It is advisable to keep low background heating on all day, even when there is no-one at home.

Ventilation tips

- Keep a small window ajar or a trickle ventilator open when someone is in the room
- Cook with the door closed and the window open to help prevent moist air circulating through the house. If you have one, use the extractor fan or hob extract system.
- In the bathroom, always keep the door shut during use and switch on the extractor fan, if available. After use, keep the door shut and open the window to let the steam out.
- Fit extractor fans to the bathroom and kitchen.
- If you replace your window units, make sure that new frames incorporate trickle ventilators. Air bricks and double glazing trickle vents should be clear and open.
- Dry clothes outside if possible. If drying inside, use a space that can be confined and ventilated.
- Move furniture away from walls to allow ventilation.
- If you are blocking up a fireplace, fit an air vent to the flue of the chimney.
- Ensure air bricks are uncovered.

These steps are already being taken but the house is still damp

Although condensation damp is common, you should take steps to regularly check the property for signs of the two other types of damp:



Rising Damp

Caused by water from the ground getting into the walls and floors often due to the failure of the damp proof course or membrane.



Penetrating Damp

Check for leaks in the roof and ensure gutter are not blocked. Ensure that there are no leaks from water pipes or mains water supply.

Alternatively missing roof tiles, damaged flat roof coverings, cracks to brickwork, missing air bricks or rendering to chimney stacks could all cause penetrating damp.

Evidence of damp from these sources should be rectified as soon as possible to prevent further damage to the property.

First steps against mould

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

The best way of avoiding severe mould growth is to minimise the source of the dampness and properly heat and ventilate your home.

Effective methods of removing mould

- Wipe down windows and windowsills every morning in cold weather.
- You can use a mild bleach solution to remove light mould staining on hard surfaces.
- To kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and windows frames with a fungicidal wash. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely.
- Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.
- Be aware that disturbing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk of respiratory problems.
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould reoccurring. Please note this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints and wallpaper.

The health risks of damp and mould

The respiratory effects of damp and mould can cause serious illness and, in the most severe cases, death. It primarily affects the airways and lungs but can also affect the eyes and skin.



People with certain health conditions are more vulnerable, including children and older adults. However, everyone living in these conditions can be impacted.

The tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak in 2020 was the result of an acute respiratory condition which the coroner found was due to prolonged exposure to mould in a home with inadequate ventilation.

Damp and mould in a home can also have a negative effect on the mental health of a tenant. Whether it is an increased concern about the health impacts, unpleasant living conditions and social isolation associated with it, or the destruction of belongings caused by mould.

Compliance with legal standards

All rented homes have to meet legal standards set out in the following regulations:

The Housing Act 2004 requires that properties must be free from hazards at the most dangerous category 1 level. This includes mould and all types of dampness.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 states that all homes must not contain conditions that are prejudicial to health.

Two acts – the **Landlord and Tenant Act 1985** and the **Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018** – both require homes to be free of hazards which are so serious that the dwelling is not suitable for occupation in that condition.

Additionally, privately rented homes must meet minimum energy efficiency standards under the **Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015**. This is currently EPC B and E.

Landlords are required to respond quickly to reports of damp and mould from tenants and assess the issue urgently, identify the cause and ensure repairs are carried out effectively and with no delay.

Tenants should be kept informed about steps being taken to resolve the issue and the property should be inspected after remedial work is carried out to ensure the issue has been fixed.

Further resources

DASH Services is a Private Rented Sector service for Local Authorities, Landlords & Tenants and is hosted by Derby City Council on behalf of a number of different Councils across England.

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Regulation on damp and mould in properties

A summary of the regulations and responsibilities for landlords and tenants can be found on the Gov.uk site along with a helpful Q&A.

Visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and read extensive guidance on damp and mould.

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