

# Damp and mould advice

Condensation is the most common form of damp. Condensation occurs when warm, moist air comes into contact with a cold surface and water droplets are formed. You notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when your bathroom mirror steams up.

Condensation can happen in any room but is most likely to occur in your bedrooms and hallway, as they are colder, and bathrooms and kitchens due to the high humidity.

Locations within a room with poor ventilation are also prone to condensation. This includes surfaces behind or under furniture, such as beds against a wall or behind wardrobes, especially where they are placed against an outside wall.

Left unchecked, it will often appear as black mould growth in corners of a room, near the skirting and where the walls meet the ceiling.

Even if the mould is treated, without solving the root cause of the condensation or damp you may experience deterioration of the plaster, decorative paint or wallpaper, the seals around window frames and the glazing, for example. This can lead to more serious issues and costly repairs or improvements.

## What causes condensation?

The degree to which condensation occurs in your home is dependent on 4 factors:

1. Moisture levels (humidity) - there is always some moisture in the air, created by everyday activities such as cooking, washing, drying clothes and bathing. Other significant causes include unvented tumble dryers and the use of bottled gas or paraffin as fuel for room heaters.
2. Adequate ventilation - without ventilation the moist air is kept within the property. A constant air flow keeps the moisture moving and reduces its ability to settle and develop mould. Ventilation can also remove moisture from the air and reduce the humidity, and therefore the risk of condensation forming.
3. Internal temperatures - warm air can hold more moisture so when the temperature falls so does its ability to hold water vapour that will condensate. A constant and regulated temperature within the property will avoid cold spots and the movement of air from the colder to warmer rooms.
4. Thermal insulation – insulation prevents warmer surfaces from becoming colder and heat leaving the property. The property needs to retain heat otherwise a consistent internal temperature cannot be maintained and colder surfaces can develop, allowing condensation to form.

# Tackling the problem

## Reduce moisture

You can reduce moisture levels by:

- covering saucepans and close the kitchen's internal door during and after cooking
- closing the bathroom door during and after bathing or showering
- drying clothes outside where possible and not over radiators, or confine drying to a single room (preferably the bathroom) and open the window and close the door
- venting tumble driers to the outside
- running cold water first and then hot to minimise steam when running a bath
- wiping down surfaces where moisture settles

## Improve ventilation

You can improve ventilation by:

- keeping a window open or using extract fans during and after cooking (including an overrun of 15 to 20 minutes) and when washing and drying clothes
- opening windows slightly when you are at home or use the trickle vents in the top of the window frames
- not blocking air vents as these could be necessary for providing oxygen to a gas appliance and allowing carbon monoxide (CO) to escape
- allowing air to circulate by moving beds and furniture away from walls and not overfilling wardrobes

## Heating and insulation

You can improve heating and insulation by:

- maintaining a low heat when the weather is cold or wet, heating all rooms, even those not used, as this is more effective in keeping your home warmer and costs less than short bursts of high heat
- not obstructing radiators with furniture or overhanging curtains that prevent heat circulation
- allowing sunlight into your home to help warm rooms
- insulating your loft and walls - if you do not have an insulation, contact us for details of work planned for your area, otherwise your gas or electricity provider may have a grant scheme

## Removing mould

Mould is a living organism and needs to be killed. To do this, wipe down affected surfaces with a Health and Safety Executive approved fungicidal wash and follow the manufacturer's instructions. You should continue to do this as part of a regular cleaning routine.

If you follow the advice above and take all reasonable steps to prevent condensation and mould occurring, then you will minimise the symptoms. We will determine the root cause of the damp or reasons for the cold surfaces and attempt to stop the issues recurring.