



herefordshire housing

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# Controlling Condensation and Mould



Creating quality choices for communities

## Controlling Condensation and Mould

Everyday things like cooking, washing, bathing and even breathing cause moisture, which is released into the air.

Condensation can cause black mould on walls, furniture, clothes and curtains. The mould looks bad and may leave a musty smell.

The damp left by condensation will also damage plasterwork and timber windows.

**This leaflet explains what condensation is and how you can reduce it.**

### What is condensation?

There is always some 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 the moisture appears as tiny droplets of water, most noticeable on windows on a cold morning. This is condensation. It can also be seen on mirrors when you have a bath or shower, and on cold surfaces such as tiles or cold walls.

Condensation occurs in cold weather, even when the weather is dry. It does not leave a 'tidemark' around its edges on walls. If there is a 'tidemark', this dampness might have another cause, such as:

- Rising damp
- Leaking or blocked gutters, down pipes and overflows.
- Missing tiles or slates from the roof.
- Rubbish or soil piled against the wall above the level of the damp-proof course.
- Internal plumbing leaks.

Look for condensation in your home on or near windows, in corners and, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. Condensation forms on cold surfaces and places where there is little movement of air.



## Problems that can be caused by excessive condensation

Dampness caused by excessive condensation can lead to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes and other fabrics and the rotting of wooden window frames. In addition, damp humid conditions provide an environment in which house dust mites can easily multiply. The presence of mould and dust mites can make existing breathing conditions such as asthma and bronchitis worse.

### First steps against condensation

You will need to take proper steps to deal with condensation, but meanwhile there are some simple things you should do straight away.

Dry your windows and windowsills every morning, as well as surfaces in the kitchen and bathroom that have become wet. Wring out your cloth rather than drying it on a radiator or in front of a heater.

### First steps against mould growth

First treat the mould already in your home, then deal with the basic problem of condensation to stop mould reappearing.

To kill and remove mould, wash down or spray mould-affected walls, ceilings and paintwork with a fungicidal wash (Mould & Mildew remover) that carries a Health & Safety Executive (HSE) approval number, and ensure you follow the instructions for safe use. These fungicidal washes are often available at local supermarkets or Do It Yourself outlets.

Dry-clean mildewed clothes, shampoo carpets. Do not try to remove mould by using a brush or vacuum cleaner as this can release spores and increase the risk of breathing problems.

After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint and a fungicidal resistant wallpaper paste to help prevent the mould recurring. The effect of fungicidal or anti-condensation paint is destroyed if covered with ordinary paint or wallpaper.

**But remember: The only lasting cure for severe mould is to get rid of the condensation.**

## What causes condensation?

There are three main factors that cause condensation:

- Too much moisture being produced in your home.
- Not enough ventilation.
- Controlling cool temperatures.

You need to look at all of these factors to cure a condensation problem.

## Moisture produced in your home

Everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes. Even our breathing adds some moisture (remember breathing on cold windows and mirrors to fog them up?).

One person asleep adds half a pint of water to the air overnight and at twice that rate when active during the day.

To give you some idea as to how much extra water this could be in a day, here are a few examples, imagine the pints as milk bottles: -

- 2 people at home for 16 hours = 3 pints.
- A bath or shower = 2 pints.
- Drying clothes indoors = 9 pints.
- Cooking and use of a kettle = 6 pints.
- Washing dishes = 2 pints.
- Bottled gas heater (8 hours use) = 4 pints.
- Total moisture added in one day = 26 pints or 14.8 litres.

## Reduce the potential for condensation by producing less moisture

Hang your washing outside to dry if possible, or hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or extractor fan on if one is fitted. Do not be tempted to put it on a radiator or in front of a radiant fire.

- If you use a tumble dryer, make sure it is vented to the outside or that it is of the new condensing type.
- Always cook with pan lids on, and turn the heat down once the water has boiled. Only use the minimum amount of water for cooking vegetables.

When filling your bath, run the cold water first then add the hot - it will reduce the steam by 90%, which leads to condensation.

Try to avoid use of bottled gas heaters: they produce about 8 pints of moisture from an average-sized gas cylinder. (Your tenancy agreement may not allow you to use this type of heater).

Do not use your gas cooker to heat your kitchen as it produces moisture when burning gas. (You might notice your windows misting over).

## Ventilation of your home

Ventilation can help to reduce condensation by removing moist air from your home and replacing it with drier air from outside.

- Help to reduce condensation that has built up overnight by 'cross ventilating' your home - opening to the first notch a small window downstairs and a small one upstairs. (They should be on opposite sides of the house, or diagonally opposite if you live in a flat). At the same time, open the interior room doors, this will allow drier air to circulate throughout your home. Cross ventilation should be carried out for about 30 minutes each day.

**Note:** Make sure that the accessible windows will not cause a security problem if left open - remember to close them when you go out.

- Ventilate your kitchen when cooking, washing up or washing by hand. A window slightly open is as good as one open. If you have one, use your extractor hood or extractor.

- Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom for about 20 minutes after use by opening a small top window. Use an extractor if fitted - they are cheap to run and are very effective in removing moisture from a room very quickly.
- Ventilate your bedroom by leaving a window slightly open at night, or use the trickle ventilators if fitted. (Again, remember your security).
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed to prevent moisture escaping and moving around the rest of your home.
- To reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items, allow air to circulate around them by removing 'false' wardrobe backs or drilling breather holes in them.

You can place furniture on blocks to allow air to circulate underneath. Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls, and where possible place wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.

Pull shelves away from the backs of wardrobes and cupboards. Never overfill wardrobe and cupboards, as it restricts air circulation.







## The temperature of your home

Warm air holds more moisture than cooler air, which is more likely to deposit droplets of condensation around your home. Air is like a sponge: the warmer it is, the more moisture it will hold. Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. That means that it is better to have a medium-to-high level of heat throughout the home.

Keeping the heating on at low all day in cold weather will help to control condensation, but keep a check on your meters to check how much it is costing you.

- If you have a heating system such as electric storage radiators but are afraid to use it because you have been told it is expensive to run, please contact the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (EEAC) for advice on how to control your heating system on FREEPHONE 0800 512 012. You might find it costs less to run than you expect or have experienced in the past.

- If you do not have heating in every room, you could keep the doors of unheated rooms open to allow some heat into them.
- To add extra heat to rooms without any form of installed heating, it is better to use electric heaters, for example oil-filled radiators or panel heaters, on a low setting. Remember, you should not use portable bottled gas heaters in homes suffering with condensation as they give out a lot of moisture whilst in use. It is actually cheaper to heat a room with on-peak electricity than by using bottled gas heaters.
- If you have a freezer, it is a good idea to put it in a space suffering from condensation, as the heat from the motor should help to keep condensation at bay.

Be careful not to 'over-ventilate' your home when it is cold, as it will cause the temperature inside your home to drop and make condensation more likely. It will also increase your heating costs.

## To control condensation - remember the key points

### Produce less moisture vapour:

- Put lids on saucepans.
- Do not dry clothes in front of a fire or over radiators. Dry them outside.
- Vent your tumble dryer to the outside air.
- Do not use portable gas and paraffin heaters; they give off a lot of water.
- When running a bath, put cold water in first. This reduces the amount of steam.

### Ventilate effectively:

- After bathing or showering, open the window to let the steam out.
- Increase ventilation when cooking and washing.
- Keep doors shut when cooking.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes.
- If extractor fans are fitted, use them.
- Do not block air vents in walls or floors.

### Heat you home effectively:

- Keep low background heat on all day.
- Ensure your gas appliances are serviced annually.

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Minicom users please call: **(01432) 378 487**

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#### Russian

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