

CONDENSATION AND MOULD

...how to control it



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. Some of this moisture appears as tiny droplets of water, most noticeable on windows on cold mornings. This is condensation.

Condensation will also be seen on bathroom mirrors and on cold surfaces such as tiles or walls.

It occurs in cold weather, even when the weather is dry. It doesn't always leave a 'tidemark' round its edges on walls. If it does, this dampness might have another cause - water leaking from a plumbing fault, loose roof tiles or rising damp.

Condensation can appear on or near windows, in corners and, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. It forms on cold surfaces and in 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. Also, damp humid conditions provide an environment in which house dust mites can easily multiply.

House dust mites and mould thrive in the moist conditions that excessive condensation causes. The spores released by mould and the faeces and skin casts from dust mites can produce allergic reactions in sensitive people. Homes should therefore be free from dampness and carpets and beds vacuumed regularly.



First steps against condensation

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

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



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, wipe down or spray walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash that carries a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) 'approval number', ensuring that you follow the instructions for its safe use. These fungicidal washes are often available at local supermarkets. Dry-clean mildewed clothes, and shampoo carpets. Do not try to remove mould by using a brush or vacuum cleaner.

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

Remember...

... the only lasting cure for severe mould is to get rid of the dampness

What causes condensation

There are four main factors that cause condensation:

- too much moisture being produced in your home
- cold surfaces
- not enough ventilation to allow moisture to escape outside
- the temperature of your home

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

Too much moisture

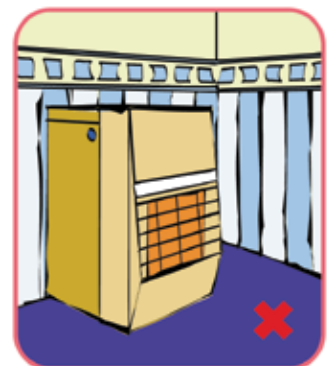
Our everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes. Even our breathing adds some moisture - one person asleep adds half a pint of water to the air overnight and at twice that rate when active during the day.

In addition:

Two people at home	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/14.8 litres

Produce less moisture

- Hang washing outside to dry if at all possible, or hang in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or extractor fan on. Don't be tempted to put on radiators or in front of a radiant heater.
- 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. Using lids will also save on gas and electricity.
- When filling the bath, run the cold water first then add the hot - it will reduce the steam by 90%.
- If you use a tumble drier, make sure it is vented to the outside or that it is a condensing type.
- Don't use the gas cooker to heat the kitchen as it produces moisture when burning gas.
- Try to avoid the use of bottled gas heaters - they produce about 8 pints of moisture from an average-sized gas cylinder. (Tenancy Agreements may not allow the use of this type of heater).
- When using a steam iron have a window open.
- Kitchen extract systems should be vented outside.



Ventilation

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

- Help to reduce condensation that has built up overnight by 'cross-ventilating' your home - open 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.



Make sure that accessible windows will not cause a security problem - remember to close them when you go out.

- Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom for about 20 minutes after use by opening a small top window. Use an extractor fan if possible - they are cheap to run and very effective.
- Ventilate your kitchen when cooking, washing up or washing by hand. A window slightly open is as good as one fully open. If you have one, use your cooker extractor hood or extractor fan.
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors shut to prevent moisture escaping into the rest of the house.
- Ventilate your bedroom by leaving a window slightly open at night, or use trickle ventilators if fitted. But again, remember security.
- To reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and stored items, allow air to circulate round them by removing 'false' wardrobe backs or by drilling breather holes in them. You can also place furniture on blocks to allow air to circulate underneath. Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and walls, and where possible place wardrobes and furniture against internal walls. Pull shelves away from the backs of wardrobes and cupboards. Never overfill wardrobes and cupboards, as it restricts air circulation.



Cold surfaces

Condensation forms more easily on cold surfaces - walls and ceilings. In many cases, those surfaces can be made warmer by improving the insulation and by draughtproofing.

Insulation and draughtproofing will also help keep the whole house warmer and will cut fuel bills. When the whole house is warmer, condensation becomes less likely.



Loft and wall insulation are the most effective forms of insulation. When installing any draughtproofing, observe the following guidance.

- Do not draughtproof rooms with a condensation problem, or where there is a heater or cooker that burns gas or solid fuel
- Do not block permanent ventilators or airbricks installed for heating or heating appliances
- Do not draughtproof bathroom or kitchen windows.

Grants for energy efficiency improvement

You may be able to get a grant to help insulate your home to make it more energy efficient.

Call the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre (ESTAC) to find out if you qualify for any of the grant schemes available, and for free advice on energy saving measures. Contact them on Freephone 0800 512012 or visit www.energysavingtrust.org.uk.

Tenants whose landlords have refused to allow the installation of grant-funded energy efficiency measures should contact the council's Environmental Health team who may be able to intervene.

Temperature

Warm air holds more moisture than cooler air which is more likely to deposit droplets of condensation round 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.

It is better to have a medium-to-low level of heat throughout the house. Keeping the heating on 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 don't 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, not to use portable bottled gas heaters in homes suffering with condensation as they give out a lot of moisture whilst in use. Contrary to popular belief, 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 'overventilate' your home when it is cold, as it will cause the temperature inside to drop and make condensation more likely. It will also increase your heating costs.



Key points to remember

**Reduce the amount of moisture
you produce**



Improve the ventilation

**Reduce the number of cold
surfaces in your home**



**Maintain an adequate
temperature**



Useful contacts

Citizens Advice Bureau;

277 High Street, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 8DW

Tel: 01609 776 551

Web: citizensadvice.org.uk

Yorkshire Energy Partnership;

Gives advice on available grant funding for energy efficiency improvements.

Tel: 01904 545 020

Web: yorkshireenergypartnership.org.uk

Energy Saving Advice Service;

Tel: 0300 123 1234

Web: energysavingtrust.org.uk

Home Heat;

Provide advice and assistance on reducing energy costs

Tel: 0800 336 699

Pensions Service;

Benefits advice for over 60's

Tel: 0845 606 0265

Web: thepensionservice.gov.uk

Vale & Dale Home Improvement Agency

Handy person service for vulnerable people

Tel: 0845 200 8646

Hambleton Council Housing Options Team

Provide free and impartial advice on housing options

Tel: 0845 121 1555

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Hambleton District Council

Environmental Health Service, Civic Centre,
Stone Cross, Northallerton DL6 2UU

01609 779977

info@hambleton.gov.uk

hambleton.gov.uk