

Dealing with **Condensation and Damp**



Walsall Council



Action for Warm Homes

Dealing with Damp and Condensation

During the colder months condensation becomes a major problem in many British homes.

It is caused when warm moist air hits a cold surface such as a window or external wall and condenses, running down the cold surface as water droplets. If left this moisture can develop into black mould which looks and smells bad and can cause thousands of pounds worth of damage to clothes, furniture, books, shoes and decorations as well as causing health problems.

Condensation can be a problem in any property no matter how old it is. It is often worse in homes that have been 'modernised' if ventilation and the circulation of air is reduced.

Promoting good ventilation and air circulation around the home is very important in the prevention of condensation; this allows the air to release its moisture outside your home preventing future problems inside your home.

Did you know?

Drying clothes indoors can add **10 to 15 litres (18 to 26 pints)** a week



Showering, cooking, bathing and washing can add **15 to 20 litres (26 to 35 pints)** a week



Just by **breathing** a family of four can add moisture to the air equivalent to **30 to 40 litres (53 to 70 pints)** of water a week



Condensation Prevention Checklist

General Home Checklist

- In colder weather try and keep temperatures between 18-21°C in main living areas whilst indoors.
- Don't block air bricks or air vents.
- To kill and remove mould wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash which carries a Health and Safety Executive approval number.
- Dry washing outside when possible.
- Don't dry clothes on radiators. This will make your boiler work harder to heat your house and cost almost as much as using a tumble dryer, whilst creating a lot of condensation in your home.
- If you have to dry clothing indoors, and don't have a tumble dryer, place clothes on a drying rack in a sunny room where a window can be opened slightly.
- No drying rack? Put your clothes on hangers and hang from a curtain pole above a slightly opened window; this can also reduce the need for ironing.

Living Room Checklist

- Open window trickle vents during the day or when going out, or open windows for at least 10 minutes every day.
- Lay thick carpet with a good thermal underlay.
- Hang thick, heavy lined curtains during the winter.

Kitchen Checklist

- Close internal doors whilst cooking and open windows.
- Put lids on pans (this also reduces boiling times and helps save you money).
- Use an extractor fan if you have one.
- Only boil as much water as you need in a kettle to reduce steam.

Bathroom Checklist

- ✓ Open windows whilst bathing/washing and leave them open for about 20 minutes after, if it's safe to do so.
- ✓ Use an extractor fan if you have one.
- ✓ When running a bath put the cold water in first; this results in significantly less condensation.
- ✓ Take shorter showers!
- ✓ Wipe down windows/mirrors/tiles/shower doors with a window squeegee and mop up the moisture with a super absorbent cloth which can be rung out into your washbasin.
- ✓ Don't leave wet towels lying around.
- ✓ Try drying yourself with a smaller towel and wringing it out, wrapping yourself in a bigger towel or dressing gown for warmth. Microfibre towels are great for this as they absorb more water and dry quickly.

Bedroom Checklist

- ✓ Wipe down windows with a window squeegee and wring it out in your sink.
- ✓ Open window trickle vents during the day or when going out, or open windows for at least 10 minutes every day.
- ✓ Don't put furniture, including beds, against any outside walls and try and leave a gap between the wall and furniture to allow airflow.
- ✓ Lay thick carpet with a good thermal underlay.
- ✓ Hang thick, heavy lined curtains during the winter.

Decorating

- ✓ When wallpapering, use a paste containing a fungicide to prevent further mould growth.
- ✓ Use thermal lining paper under wallpaper when decorating.
- ✓ Use mould resistant paint on areas prone to mould such as ceiling above windows.

Damp

Rising or penetrating damp can cause problems in your home although it is less common than condensation. If you think damp is causing a problem in your home you will need to seek advice as to what is causing it and how it can be fixed.

Rising Damp

Rising damp is caused by a failed or 'bridged' damp-proof course. This allows moisture in the ground to rise up through the ground floor walls of your home, sometimes to a height of one meter.

You can usually identify rising damp because it is often associated with what looks like a 'tide mark' at the edge of the area of damp caused by salt deposits.



Penetrating Damp

Penetrating damp is classed as any water that finds its way inside your home from the outside. It can occur at all levels of the building but is usually higher up.

Water can get into your home through: Overflowing gutters, missing roof tiles, leaking pipes and downspouts, badly fitting windows/doors and damaged pointing, cladding, flashing or render.



Typical signs of penetrating damp in your home are:

- **growing areas of damp on walls or ceilings**
- **blotchy patches on walls**
- **wet and crumbly plaster**
- **signs of spores or mildew and/or staining**
- **drips and puddles**

Condensation

Condensation can cause mould to form in your home and lead to staining/damaging wallpaper, wall surfaces, window frames, furniture and clothing.

The mould and spores carry the 'musty smell' that is often associated with a damp house.

Black mould is a sign of damp from condensation as it can't grow where salt crystals are present (as with rising damp).

Water vapour is generated in your home in many ways but the main causes are:

- **steam from cooking and boiling the kettle**
- **baths and showers**
- **drying clothes inside on the radiator**
- **unsuitable or no venting of tumble dryers**

The best way to deal with mould is to remove it from walls using a special fungicidal wash. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Special paints are also available that will delay the return of the mould, but unless you take steps to reduce condensation it will always grow back.

The major difference between condensation and other forms of dampness is that **you** have the ability to reduce or solve the problem just through changing what you do in your home in the home.

Areas prone to Condensation

The following areas are particularly prone to condensation:

- **cold surfaces such as mirrors, windows and window frames**
- **kitchens and bathrooms where a lot of steam is created**
- **outside walls, walls of unheated rooms and cold corners of rooms**
- **wardrobes/cupboards and behind furniture against an outside wall**



Reducing condensation

There are four things to consider when dealing with a condensation problem:

Heating

Condensation is likely to be a problem in homes which are **under heated**:

- **try to keep temperatures in all rooms above 15°C as this will reduce condensation**

Also seek to have living rooms at 18-21°C for a comfortable temperature



Insulation

Insulating your home will help in 3 ways:

1. **warming surface temperatures of walls, ceilings and windows**
2. **helping to keep your home warm and increasing temperature of the home**
3. **reducing heating costs allowing your home to be heated cheaper but to a higher level**

Ventilation

Condensation will occur less if you allow air to circulate freely. Make sure air vents and air bricks are not covered or obstructed.

Reduce the moisture

Condensation in the home occurs when there is too much moisture in the air. Take all appropriate steps to reduce the amount of moisture in the air by following the checklists overleaf.

Coughs and Health

Most coughs clear up within 3 weeks and don't require any treatment. For more persistent coughs, it's a good idea to see your local Pharmacist or GP. **For more information use: www.nhs.uk**

Damp and your home

Key areas to maintain



Housing

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