

Booklet  
No. 20



# Preventing and curing condensation problems in your home

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# Preventing and curing condensation problems in your home

Damp and mould growth can be caused by condensation. This leaflet explains how condensation forms and how you can keep it to a minimum and reduce the risk of dampness and mould growth in your home.

If you have a condensation or mould problem in your home, please follow the advice below before contacting us to ask for an inspection.

## ***Is it condensation?***

Condensation is not the only cause of damp. It can also come from:

- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows.
- Rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing, water penetration through walls or around window frames.
- Rising damp due to a defective or missing damp-course. These causes of damp often leave a tidemark and salt deposits on the wall. You should contact us to get the necessary repairs carried out.

To report any of the above, refer to our leaflet *The tenants' guide to repairs, maintenance and improvements*.

If you do not think the damp comes from any of these causes, it is probably condensation.

## ***What is condensation?***

- Condensation is caused when warm moist air, produced by ordinary household activities such as cooking and bathing, comes in to contact with a cold surface, such as a cold wall or a window.
- If the moist air does not escape to the outside through an open window, air vent or extractor fan, it stays in your home moving around until it finds a cold spot where it can condense.
- There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. As the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water appear. This is condensation. You notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath or a shower.

- Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather, whether it is raining or dry. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air and can often lead to mould forming in corners of rooms, in window reveals or behind wardrobes and cupboards.
- Condensation is the most common form of damp that can affect buildings, but condensation related dampness often leads to mould growth on wall and ceiling surfaces, backs of carpets, furniture and the inside of cupboards.

### ***How to avoid condensation***

Here are some things you can do to help avoid condensation in your home:

#### ***Heating***

- Heat your home effectively using your heating controls to maintain a constant even heat throughout your home.
- Have the right balance of heating and ventilation - heating to keep the building warm and ventilation to allow moist air to escape from the building.
- In cold weather, the best way to keep rooms warm enough to avoid condensation is to keep the central heating on low to provide background heating all day, even when there is no-one at home. You can let the system's thermostat or thermostatic radiator valves do this for you.
- Other forms of heating, such as storage heaters may need to be manually operated and it is advisable these are left on low to moderate settings for long periods of the day.
- Try to avoid having cold areas in the home and ensure the whole of the property is heated to a moderate temperature. Your gas or electricity supply company, Energy Watch and the Post Office, can provide advice about budget schemes that spread the cost of heating.

#### ***Ventilation***

- Keep a small window or trickle vent open when someone is in the room.
- In winter, open windows for short periods of time each day. Outdoor winter air is much drier than indoor air and opening the window allows the warm moist air to escape and dry air to enter.

- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by ensuring any extractor fan is operating or opening the windows. Leave windows open for at least half an hour after bathing or cooking. This will let moisture out. Remember to close them again afterwards, so the rooms do not get too cold.
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use, even if your kitchen or bathroom has an extractor fan. Closing the door is advisable as this will help prevent moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms, which are often colder and more likely to suffer with condensation. Also, keep bedroom doors closed to reduce the risk of moisture travelling to these rooms.
- Where possible, allow space for the air to circulate in and around your furniture, position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls rather than against outside walls. Open doors to ventilate cupboards and wardrobes as much as possible. Avoid placing furniture or heavy curtains in front of radiators.

### ***How to avoid producing a lot of moisture very quickly***

- Cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Do not use paraffin, petrol, diesel and portable flueless bottled gas heater. These are prohibited by your tenancy agreement.
- If weather conditions permit, dry washing outdoors, use a ventilated tumble drier or use an airer in the bathroom with the door closed and the window partially open.
- Do not dry washing on radiators.
- Tumble dryers remove moisture from wet clothing and must be vented to the outside. If your tumble dryer is part of the washing machine, it will be vented automatically.
- Ensure any condensation forming on windows is wiped dry as soon as it occurs. This will prevent the condensation collecting on the window sill and running on to the walls below and spoiling your decoration. Wipe dry surfaces where moisture forms to prevent mould from growing.
- Make use of extractor fans or cooker hoods if you have them.
- Try putting cold water in the bath first before adding hot - this reduces the risk of steam being created.

- Close bathroom and kitchen doors while cooking and bathing and open a window in that room. The warm moist air can then escape through the window and is prevented from travelling to other parts of your home.

It is important to clean and remove mould regularly as it occurs, using special fungicidal products. This will help reduce future mould growth.

### ***How much moisture do you produce in your home?***

Here are a few examples to show how much extra water could be produced in a day:

- Two people at home can produce = 3 pints
- A bath or shower = 2 pints
- Washing clothes = 1 pint
- Drying clothes indoors (6lbs /2.75kg of washing) = 10 pints
- Cooking and use of a kettle = 6 pints
- Washing dishes = 2 pints

This means the total moisture added in one day can be up to 28 pints or 15.9 litres.

### ***How to produce less moisture***

You will not reduce condensation dampness, unless you take steps to balance the level of moisture, heat and ventilation in your home.

Never block permanent ventilators eg, vents to windows, airbricks to walls and chimney breasts.

Many people use dehumidifiers to try and cure or reduce condensation in their home. Dehumidifiers are expensive to run and will not solve the problem if the damp is caused by condensation.

### ***How to prevent mould***

- First remove mould growth by wiping down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash, which carries a Health & Safety Executive approval number. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.

- 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 recurring. This paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paint or wallpaper.

The only way to avoid severe mould growth is to eliminate condensation and dampness in your home.

### ***More information***

For more information please contact:

By post:           Property Services Team  
                      Housing  
                      Tandridge District Council Offices  
                      8 Station Road East  
                      Oxted RH8 0BT

By telephone: 01883 722000

By e-mail:       customerservices@tandridge.gov.uk



[www.tandridge.gov.uk](http://www.tandridge.gov.uk)



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You can find information about businesses, councillors, council tax and benefits, housing, jobs, planning, leisure, recycling and waste collections and much more.

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