



# Keep your home free from condensation, damp and mould

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# Is your home damp?

Damp and condensation can cause mould on walls, furniture and clothing. Their presence in your home encourages the growth of mould and mites and can increase the risk of respiratory illness. This factsheet explains how damp and condensation form and how you can minimise the risk of mould.

## Did you know?

Everyday activities create moisture in your home, including breathing. See below for some facts on how much extra water can be added to the air in your home:

- Drying clothes inside = 6 pints per load
- Cooking and boiling the kettle = 3 pints
- Taking a bath or shower = 2 pints
- Breathing = 3 pints per day

## Is it damp?

Damp can be caused by:

- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows
- Rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing, spilling from a blocked gutter, penetrating around window frames, or leaking through a cracked pipe
- Rising damp due to a defective damp course or because there is no damp course.

These causes of damp often leave a 'tidemark'. If you do not think the damp comes from any of these causes, then it is probably condensation. In this case, there are some things you can do to help prevent this.

## Is it condensation?

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If 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 a mirror mists over when you have a bath.

Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather, whether it is raining or dry, and it does not leave a 'tidemark'. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. Look for it in corners, on or near windows, and in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. It often forms on north-facing walls.

# How to avoid condensation

These three steps will help you reduce condensation in your home:

## 1. Produce less moisture

Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly:

- Cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling
- Avoid using paraffin and portable, flueless bottled gas heaters, as these heaters put a lot of moisture into the air
- Dry washing outdoors on a line, or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on
- Vent any tumble dryer to the outside, unless it is the self-condensing type. DIY kits are available for this.

## 2. Ventilate to remove moisture

You can ventilate your home without making draughts:

- Keep a small window ajar or a trickle ventilator open when someone is in the room
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by opening the windows wider
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use. Even if your kitchen or bathroom has an extractor fan, this will help prevent moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms, which are often colder and more likely to get condensation
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes. Avoid putting too many things in them, as this stops the air circulating
- Cut a ventilation slot in the back of each shelf or use slatted shelves
- Cut 'breather' holes in doors and in the back of wardrobes, and leave space between the back of the wardrobe and the wall
- Where possible, don't position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.

### 3. Insulate, draught-proof and heat your home

Insulation and draught-proofing will help keep your home warm and will also cut fuel bills. When the whole home is warmer, condensation is less likely:

- In your loft, check that you have sufficient insulation. Remember to draught-proof the loft hatch, but do not block the openings under the eaves
- In the winter, at night, make sure you close your curtains
- In very cold weather, keep low background heating on all day, even when there is no one at home
- Ensure that you know how to operate your heating effectively and ask us if you are unsure
- Do not use your gas or electric fire as the primary heat source in your home. You need to heat all rooms with your central heating system.

## First steps against mould

- First, treat any mould you may already have in your home. If you then deal with the basic problem of condensation, mould should not reappear
- To kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash that carries a Health and Safety Executive 'approval number'. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely
- 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. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper

The only lasting way to avoid severe mould is to eliminate the damp and condensation that is causing the wall to be wet.

## Need help?

Please contact us using the phone number or contact details provided by your landlord. Our team can help arrange the next steps and answer any questions you have.