

How to prevent damp, mould and condensation in your home

Too much moisture in your home can lead to damp and mouldy conditions and is often due to condensation. This can be caused by windows that have steamed up because the outdoor temperature is colder than inside, steam from cooking and from drying washing indoors, and can be made worse where there is limited ventilation preventing air circulation. Condensation can eventually lead to damp and mould on walls, ceilings and behind furniture.

Other factors causing damp is from leaking pipes and roofs and from blocked gutters. Rising damp from the ground can also be a problem and is usually where a damp course is defective. This can be identified by a white tidemark on the walls. If you have rising damp in the property, you will need to contact a professional or your landlord to rectify the issue.

How to avoid condensation and damp in your property:

Although it is difficult to totally stop condensation, you can do things in your home that can help reduce it.

There are three main factors to help prevent condensation – *Heating, ventilation and moisture*.

Heating and insulation:

- You can make sure that you have adequate heating and insulation in your home to reduce moisture:
- The ideal temperature at home should range between 19-22 degrees Celsius in living rooms, kitchen and bathroom, and 16-20 degrees Celsius in bedrooms.
- When you are away from home, the temperature should not drop under 15 degrees Celsius to avoid condensation and increased humidity levels.
- Do not heat up cold bedrooms in the evening by opening the door to heated rooms. The warm and humid air will condense onto the cold walls of the bedroom.

- Good insulation of the building creates warmer walls and ceilings, and therefore inhibits mould growth by preventing condensation from forming on them.
- Airtight windows and buildings require more active ventilation.

Ventilation:

You can ventilate your home without making draughts to reduce moisture:

- Keep a small window ajar when someone is in the room.
- If your windows have been recently renewed open the trickle ventilators provided.
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by opening the windows wider, or better still, use a humidity-controlled electric fan if one is fitted.
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use, even if your kitchen and 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.
- Do not block air-brick vents.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes.
- Avoid putting too many things in cupboards and wardrobes as this stops the air circulating.
- Cut a ventilation slot in the back of each shelf or use slatted shelves.
- Where possible, position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.

Do not

- block permanent ventilators.
- completely block up chimneys. Instead leave a hole about two bricks in size and fit a louvered grille over it (this work should be done by a builder or specialist).
- draught-proof rooms where there is condensation or mould.
- draught-proof windows in the bathroom and kitchen.
- tamper with any ventilation or extract unit installed within your property.

Moisture:

These five steps will help you reduce the condensation in your home by producing less moisture:

- Cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Avoid using paraffin and portable bottled gas heaters as these heaters produce a lot of moisture in the air.
- Do not dry washing on radiators. Instead dry washing outdoors on a line, or put in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or a fan on.
- Tumble dryers must be vented to the outside.

How to prevent mould:

Treat any mould you may already have in your home. You can buy household fungicidal wash products from most homeware wear stores. If you then deal with the basic problem of condensation as listed above, mould should not reappear.

- Wipe down any condensation forming on windows and sills every morning.
- To kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash, which carries a Health and Safety Executive approval number. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely.
- Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to prevent mould recurring. **Please note:** this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper.

The long-term solution to avoiding severe mould is to eliminate dampness as illustrated in this document.

You can carry out some of these measures at very little cost. However, if you are a tenant you may need the permission from your landlord.

If the above points are followed, condensation should not be a persistent problem in your home. However, you must remember that a balance is needed between these factors and you may need to experiment and persevere until the problem is resolved.

There are various grant, loan and discount schemes which may apply to you. You may even be able to get free insulation and a new heating system if you are on certain government benefits. If you are a tenant, your landlord may be entitled to heating and insulation grants.

To find out more you can contact the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre on 0300 123 1234.