

Preventative Maintenance

Damp and Condensation

Is your home damp? Damp can cause mould on walls and furniture and make timber window frames rot. Damp housing encourages the growth of mould and mites and can increase the risk of respiratory illness.

Some damp is caused by condensation. This leaflet explains how condensation forms and how you can keep it to a minimum, so reducing the risk of dampness and mould growth.

Damp and Mould - What is 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 the mirror mists over when you have a bath.

Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather, whether it is raining or dry. 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 the corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. It often forms on north-facing walls.

Is it condensation?

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

- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows.
- Rain leaking into the building, for example through a hole in the roof, overflowing (or leaking) guttering/down pipes or penetrating around window frames.
- Rising damp due to a defective damp-course or because there is no damp course.

These causes of damp often leave a 'tidemark'.

If your home is newly built it may be damp because the water used during its construction (for example, in plaster) is still drying out.

If your home is damp for any of these reasons it may take weeks of heating and ventilation to dry out, even after any problems have been cured, consider purchasing a dehumidifier which may help in the longer term.



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

How to avoid condensation?

These three steps will help you to reduce the condensation in your home.

Produce less moisture

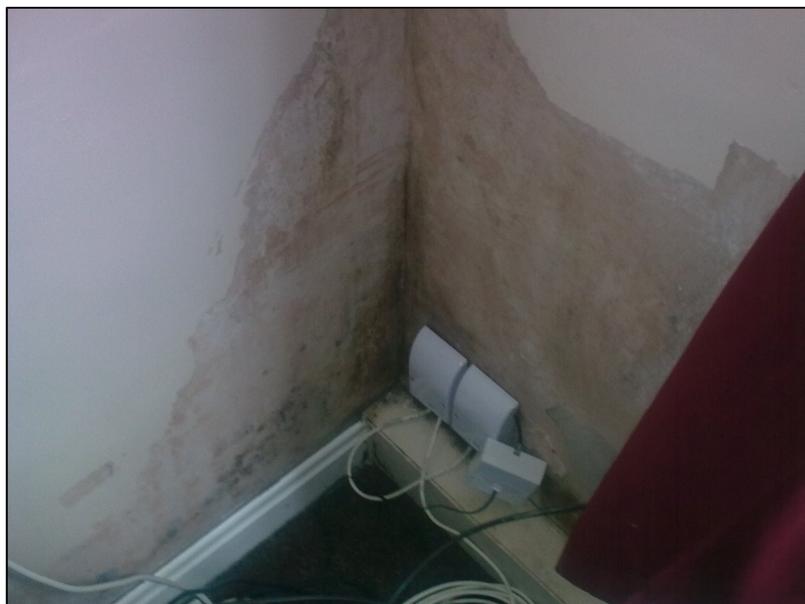
Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly:

- Cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Keep the Kitchen door closed and leave the window open or the extractor fan on.
- Avoid using paraffin and portable flueless bottled gas heaters as these heaters put a lot of moisture into the air.
- Running the cold water for a bath before adding the hot water. To reduce the spread of steam, leave the bathroom door closed whilst the bath is filling.
- Dry washing outdoors on a line.

Ventilate to remove moisture

You can ventilate your home without making draughts:

- Ensure that tumble dryers are properly vented (see fitting/manufacturers instructions for the appliance).
- Keep a small window ajar when possible or ensure that trickle vents are open in double glazed windows, if fitted.
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use, and after using, by opening the windows wider. Where you have an extractor fan, it may be helpful to have this linked to the lighting circuit and provided with a 20 minute “over run” so that the fan continues to work after you have finished in the room. Or better still, use a humid statically controlled electric fan. These come on automatically when the air becomes humid and they are cheap to run.
- 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 liable to condensation problems.



- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes. Avoid putting too many things in them as this stops the air circulating. Where possible, position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls. Leave space between the back of the wardrobe and the wall.
- If you own the furniture, you may consider (a) cutting a ventilation slot in the back of each shelf (or using slatted shelves) or (b) cutting breather holes in the doors and in the back of wardrobes.
- If you replace your window units at any time, make sure that the new frames incorporate trickle ventilators.
- A dehumidifier may help to remove moisture; however these only work efficiently where the house is heated.
- Wipe off wet surfaces, for example where condensation has formed on windows or after using the shower. This means that the ventilation will be more effective in removing the remaining moisture.

Insulate, draughtproof and heat your home

Insulation and draughtproofing will help keep your home warm and will also cut fuel bills. In your living room try to maintain a temperature of not less than 21 degrees. If you have thermostatic radiator valves in your bedroom and spare rooms, try to achieve a temperature of not less than 18 degrees.

- Insulate your loft. Remember to draughtproof the loft hatch but do not block the openings under the eaves
- Consider cavity wall insulation. Before deciding though, get advice from the Staying Put Agency.
- Draught proof doors and windows. Consider secondary and double-glazing of windows to reduce heat loss and draughts but you must ensure that there is some ventilation available.
- Please note that installing double glazed windows is usually not the most cost effective way of saving on heating costs unless the windows need replacing for other reasons.
- In very cold weather, keep low background heating on all day, even when there is no one at home. If you are worried about the cost of heating the Agency can refer you on to the Energy Savings Trust.



You may be entitled to a **Warmfront** grant for heating and insulation. Speak to the Agency for further details.

Some words of warning

- Do not block permanent ventilators
- Do not completely block chimneys. Instead, leave a hole about two bricks in size and fit a louvered grille over it (at the base of the flue, where the old fire was sited). There should also be ventilation at the top of each chimney flue.
- Do not draughtproof rooms where there is condensation or mould.
- Where there is a cooker or fuel burning heater, ensure that there is enough permanent ventilation in the room for the safe use of the fitting. The appliance fitting instructions will usually give this information.

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 diluted bleach solution or 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. 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 way of preventing the mould returning is to reduce the cause of the dampness (condensation).

Useful Information

Advice on ways to heat and insulate your home can be obtained from the Energy Savings Trust on 0800 512 012 or www.energysavingtrust.org.uk.

If you have any questions or would like more information on damp and condensation in your home please contact:

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Opening Times

Monday – Thursday: 8:30pm – 5:00pm

Friday: 8:30pm – 4:30pm

