

## **Condensation guidelines for occupiers/tenants**

**Please use the 14 day check list at the rear to instantly reduce moisture.**

### What is condensation?

Warm air can hold more moisture than cold air. As soon as warm air hits a cold surface, it cools down and releases some of the moisture, depositing dampness or droplets of water on the cold surface. **This 'dampness' is condensation.**

### Condensation in the home

Ordinary household activities, such as washing and drying clothes, cooking and bathing, produce moisture rich warm air. Breathing also generates moisture. If the warm moist air cannot escape through an open window or air vent, it will move around your property until it finds a cold spot where it will deposit condensation.

The materials used to build a house, such as mortar and plaster, contain a lot of moisture. This moisture will dry out as the property is occupied and heated; however, this can take some time, and is why newly built dwellings can be especially prone to condensation.

In addition, modern improvements (such as insulation to walls, draught proofing on doors and sealed window units) minimise draughts and stop heat escaping from your home. However, these improvements also stop moisture escaping, which can result in condensation forming at cold points in the structure.

Condensation is most likely to appear on surfaces such as windows, colder parts of walls, around external door and window openings, at junctions of floors and ceilings with outside walls, and in areas where air movement is restricted, such as inside cupboards and behind furniture which is placed against outside walls (wardrobes, drawers, cupboards).

**Persistent condensation on walls and ceilings can sometimes cause black mould growth.**

### The amount of moisture circulating in a house is startling.

Two active people sharing a house will, on average, create 24 pints a day.  
Even the most mundane activities produce a lot of moisture:

Washing clothes – one pint  
Taking a bath/shower – two pints  
Heating with bottled gas or paraffin – three pints  
Cooking and boiling kettles – six pints  
Drying clothes – nine pints

Even two people walking, talking and breathing produce three pints of moisture between them every day.

### Controlling condensation in the property

Controlling condensation is a balance between heating and ventilation, together with taking simple steps to remove moisture.

#### Heating

To prevent condensation, room surfaces should be kept warm. It can take a long time for a building to warm up, so it is better to have a small amount of heat over a long period of time, than a lot of heat for a short period of time. If your property is unoccupied for any length of time, it is best to keep the heating on a low setting, rather than turning it off. If the heating is switched off while your property is unoccupied, condensation may occur as the temperature lowers. If occupants return and generate moisture before the property warms up again, the condensation could be made worse.

**Try to avoid cold areas in the property. It is better to keep all rooms heated (even if some rooms are not usually used) to a lower temperature than having one room heated to a higher temperature.**

#### Ventilation

**Airing your property, by opening windows a little and using extractor fans or vents, will allow moisture to escape outside:**

- Use extractor fans while you are cooking or bathing, and for 10 to 15 minutes after you have finished.
- Keep the bathroom door closed while bathing and, if you have a window in the bathroom, open it for about 20 minutes once you have finished (with the bathroom door closed).
- Keep a small window or a trickle ventilator (normally fitted at the top of a window) open.

## Removing moisture

Reducing the moisture in your property will reduce condensation:

- Wipe any condensation from windows and sills as it occurs. (every morning). Wet cloths must then be wrung out in the bath or sink. They must not be left to dry out on a radiator as this will reintroduce moisture into the house.
- Keep the kitchen door closed and the window open while you are cooking.
- Put lids on saucepans while you are cooking.
- Avoid drying laundry on a clothes horse or radiator. If you do need to dry clothes indoors, open the window and close the door of the room where the clothes are drying, so that moisture can escape outside rather than circulate around your home.
- If you have a non-condenser type tumble-drier, make sure it is vented to the outside.
- Ideally, place free-standing wardrobes and other furniture against internal walls, leaving a gap between the wall and the furniture so air can circulate. (Not against cold North facing outside walls).
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes and avoid overfilling them to allow air to circulate.

Wipe down affected areas (walls) with a fungicidal wash – only use products with a Health and Safety Executive approval number. Wear rubber gloves to protect your skin.

## Additional measures to reduce condensation

Cover pans when cooking  
Don't leave kettles boiling  
Dry washing outdoors whenever possible  
Don't dry washing on radiators

Proper ventilation does not make a home draughty and more expensive to run. Keeping a window slightly ajar or fitting a trickle ventilator can cut condensation.

When cooking or drying clothes, ask tenants to open windows, but do not forget to stress the importance of security – if tenants are going out, they need to double check that the windows are shut.

## General advice for condensation treatment

If condensation causes mould to grow in your property, the mould should be treated as soon as you notice it, to avoid it spreading and causing more damage to your property.

1. Sterilise the affected area with a **suitable and appropriate fungicidal wash** available from most DIY stores and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Never use washing up liquid as this will cause further mould growth. Keep the affected area under observation for at least a week and, if the mould reappears, wash it down again with fungicidal wash to make sure sterilisation is thorough.
2. Dry clean any mildewed clothing and shampoo carpets. Disturbing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk of respiratory problems.
3. If the treatment appears to have been successful, any necessary redecoration can be carried out. Use a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould, but note that this paint would not be effective if it is subsequently covered by ordinary paint or wallpaper. If wallpapering, use a paste containing a fungicide to prevent further mould growth.
4. To prevent mould returning, ensure condensation and dampness is controlled in your property.

Remember that condensation is not normally a building fault. Learning to control moisture levels is a vital part of the way we live in our properties.

**Basic 14 day check list at the rear to instantly reduce moisture.**

- 1) Keep a steady constant heat in all rooms in the property.....
- 2) Wipe down any moisture which collects on window sills daily.....  
(This will stop the moisture turning into black mould)
- 3) Keep a constant ventilation (especially any upstairs fanlight windows).....  
(This will allow excess moisture to escape)
- 4) Do not dry wet washing inside the property.....  
(Not without proper ventilation and especially not in cold or affected rooms)
- 5) Keep bathroom door closed during and after bath/showering.....  
(Also opening windows and using extractor if available)
- 6) Keep kitchen well ventilated when cooking/boiling pots/kettles.....  
(Also opening windows and using extractor if available)
- 7) Do not put any large furniture on cold (typically north facing outside walls).....  
(Always keep a 2/4 inch gap from wall for air circulation)
- 8) Regularly check walls/surfaces and remove any mould with proper solution.....  
(Keeping excess condensation under control)

This information has been supplied to us by a surveyor who specialises in dampness and condensation issues.

Note: These basic measures should be used in conjunction with the rest of the information in this sheet.