

Controlling condensation and mould

What is condensation?

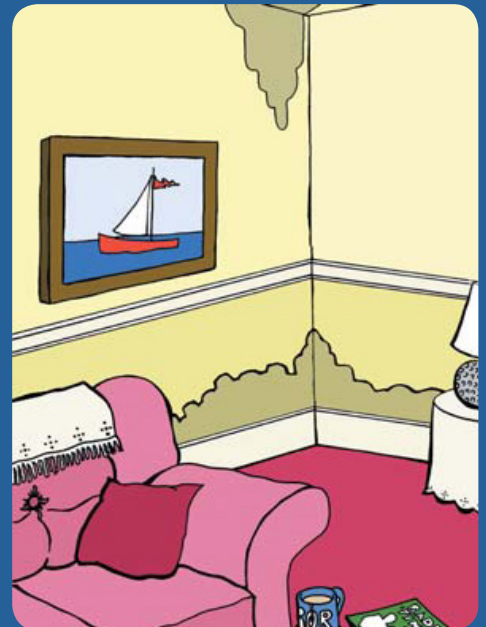
Condensation is caused when excess warm moisture in the air (steam or water vapour) meets a cold surface and turns into water.

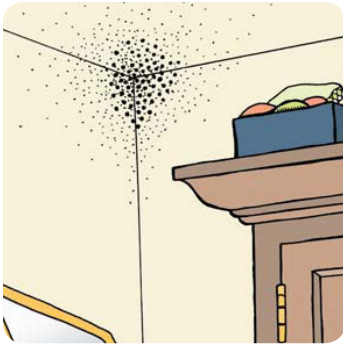
There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If air gets cold, it cannot hold all the moisture produced by everyday activities and some of this moisture appears as tiny droplets of water, most noticeably on windows on a cold morning.

This is condensation. It can also be seen on mirrors when you have a bath or shower, and on cold surfaces such as tiles or cold walls.

Condensation occurs in cold weather, even when the weather is dry. It doesn't leave a 'tidemark' around its edges on walls. If there is a 'tidemark', this dampness might have another cause, such as water leaking into your home from a plumbing fault, loose roof tiles or rising damp.

Look for condensation in your home. It can appear on or near windows, in corners and, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. Condensation forms on cold surfaces and places where there is little movement of air.





Problems that can be caused by excessive condensation

Dampness caused by excessive condensation can lead to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes and other fabrics and the rotting of wooden window frames. Also, damp humid conditions provide an environment in which house dust mites can easily multiply.

First steps against condensation

You will need to take proper steps to deal with condensation, but meanwhile there are some simple things you should do straight away.

Dry your windows and windowsills every morning, as well as surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom that have become wet. Wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator.

First steps against mould growth

First treat the mould already in your home, then deal with the basic problem of condensation to stop mould reappearing.

To kill and remove mould, wipe down or spray walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash. Make sure that you follow the instructions for its safe use. These fungicidal washes are often available at local supermarkets. Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.

Do not try to remove mould by using a brush or vacuum cleaner.

After treatment, redecorate using good-quality fungicidal paint and fungicidal resistant wall paper paste to help prevent mould recurring. The effect of fungicidal or anti-condensation paint is destroyed if covered with ordinary paint or wallpaper.

But remember: the only lasting cure for severe mould is to get rid of the dampness.



What causes condensation?

There are four main factors that cause condensation:

- Too much moisture being produced in your home
- Not enough ventilation
- Cold surfaces
- The temperature of your home.

You need to look at ALL of these to cure a condensation problem.

Too much moisture being produced in your home

Our everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes. Even our breathing adds some moisture. One person asleep adds ½ pint of water to the air overnight and twice that when active during the day.

To give you some idea as to how much extra water this could be in a day, here are some illustrations:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|--|
| two people at home for 16 hours | 3 pints | |
| A bath or shower | 2 pints | |
| Drying clothes indoors | 9 pints | |
| Cooking and use of a kettle | 6 pints | |
| Washing dishes | 2 pints | |

Total moisture added in one day = 22 pints or 12.5 litres

What can you do?

Hang your washing outside to dry if at all possible, or hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or extractor fan on. Don't be tempted to put it on radiators or in front of a fire.

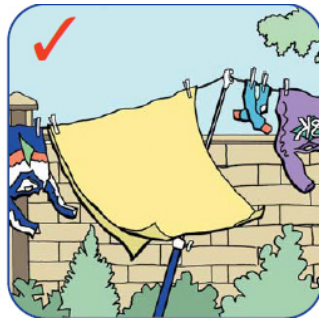
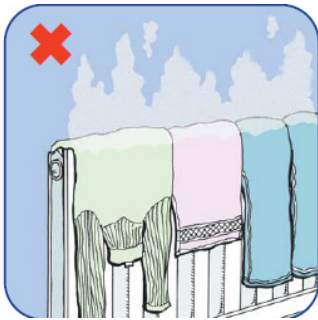
If you use a tumble drier, make sure it is vented to the outside or that it is of the new condensing type.

Always cook with pan lids on, and turn the heat down once the water has boiled.

Only use the minimum amount of water for cooking vegetables.

When filling your bath, run the cold water first then add the hot - it will reduce the steam by 90% which leads to condensation.

Don't use your gas cooker to heat your kitchen as it produces moisture when burning gas. (You might notice your windows misting over.)



Ventilation of the home

Ventilation can help to reduce condensation by removing moist air from your home and replacing it with drier air from outside.

Help to reduce condensation that has built up overnight by opening to the first notch a small window downstairs and a small window upstairs. (They should be on opposite sides of the house, or diagonally opposite if you live in a flat). At the same time, open the interior room doors. This will allow drier air to circulate throughout your home. Do this for about 30 minutes each day.

Ventilate your kitchen when cooking, washing up or washing by hand. Use your cooker extractor hood or extractor fan or open a window.

Note: Make sure you remember to close windows when you go out.

Keep your kitchen and bathroom doors closed to prevent moisture escaping into the rest of the house.

Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom for about 20 minutes after use by opening a small window. Use an extractor fan if possible.

Ventilate your bedroom by leaving a window slightly open at night or use trickle ventilators if fitted. (But again, remember your security).

Reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items by allowing air to circulate around them. Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls and, where possible place wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.

Never overfill wardrobes and cupboards as it restricts air circulation.



Cold surfaces in your home

Condensation forms more easily on cold surfaces in the home, for example walls and ceilings. In many cases, those surfaces can be made warmer by improving the insulation and draught proofing.

If you install draught proofing don't do it in rooms with a condensation problem or where there is a heater or cooker that burns gas or solid fuel.

Don't block permanent ventilators or airbricks installed for heating or heating appliances and don't draught proof bathroom or kitchen windows.

Keep your home warm

Cool air holds less moisture than warm air so is more likely to deposit droplets of condensation around your home. Keeping your home warm helps to control condensation as the warm air holds more moisture.

We realise that for many people money is tight, but keeping the heating on low all day in cold weather will help to control condensation.

Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. It is better to have a medium-to-low level of heat throughout the house.

Be careful not to "over-ventilate" your home when it is cold, it causes the temperature to drop and makes condensation more likely. It will also increase your heating costs.

To control condensation remember the key points:

- Reduce the amount of moisture you produce
- Improve the ventilation
- Reduce the number of cold surfaces in your home
- Maintain an adequate temperature.

Useful contact numbers

Simple Energy Advice

Impartial and independent advice on saving energy in your home

Tel: 0800 444202

simpleenergyadvice.org.uk

LEAP

Local Energy Advice Partnership

Tel: 0800 0607567

applyforleap.org.uk

Gas (leaks)

Gas Emergency Services emergency line: 0800 111 999

Electricity (power cuts)

UK Power Networks: 0800 3163105 or call 105

Crawley Repairs Team

If you are a Crawley Borough Council tenant and have a condensation problem please contact Crawley Repairs Team on 01293 438111 or visit crawley.gov.uk/repairs

