



A Guide to Managing Condensation and Mould

Condensation and mould can be a common problem, especially in older stone built buildings. Condensation is often found as misted up windows or as small pools on window sills. Excessive damp in a house can lead to mould growth and mites which can increase the risk of respiratory illness. The information in this leaflet will help you to deal with the problem.

What is condensation?

There is always some moisture in the air, and most of the time you cannot see it. When the air becomes colder it cannot hold the same amount of water, and small drops of water can then appear as condensation. You can see this moisture for example on a mirror when you have a bath, or when you see your clouds of breath on a cold day.

Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather, whether it is raining or dry. It does not leave a 'tidemark', but appears in places where there is little or no movement of air. Look for black mould in corners and on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. Mould may also be found on clothing or soft furnishings. It more commonly forms on north-facing walls which don't get direct heat from the sun.

Is condensation causing the mould and damp?

Condensation is not the only cause of damp. It can also arise from penetrating causes such as:

- Leaking pipes, wastes and overflows
- Rain coming through a roof where a tile or slate is missing
- Water spilling over from a blocked rhone (gutter), or penetrating around window frames or damaged roof flashings
- Rising damp due to a defective or bridged damp course, or where there is no damp course at all
- Penetrating damp often leaves a 'tidemark', and you should call our repairs line (see back page of this leaflet for the number) and have the problem dealt with.
- If you are living in a newly built home, it may be that water used during its construction is still drying out. If your home is damp for any of these reasons it may take some weeks of ventilation to dry out even when the source of the problem has been dealt with. Hiring a dehumidifier will help.
- If you do not think the damp has arisen from a penetrating cause, or your property has not been newly built, then it is very likely to be caused by condensation.

What can I do about it?

You can remove any mould by washing down with a bleach type solution or fungicidal wash, and you can buy special paints which may help to prevent the mould coming back. Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo affected carpets. Brushing or vacuuming mould affected areas only increases the risk of causing respiratory problems.

The only certain cure is to reduce the amount of moisture produced in your home, and to keep it warm and well ventilated. By doing this, you will stop the condensation forming before it becomes a problem.

Remember...The way you live in your home affects the amount of condensation you get. You won't need to make drastic changes, just bear these main points in mind:

Doors

Keep kitchen and bathroom doors shut, particularly if you are cooking, washing or bathing – otherwise water vapour will spread throughout your home and condensation is then likely to occur on external walls and ceilings in colder rooms.

Windows

The more moisture you produce in your home, the greater your chances of getting condensation and mould – unless you have adequate ventilation. Your house doesn't need to be draughty, but open your windows for a short period when they are misted up. If you are fitting draught stripping, leave a small gap for air to get through. If you have extractor fans in your kitchen or bathroom then use them when you are cooking or having a bath or shower. Ensure that the slot ventilators (if you have them) at the tops of your windows are working and free from any obstruction.

Saucepans and kettles

Try not to allow saucepans and kettles to boil any longer than is necessary, and always put the lid on your saucepan.

Heating

You will get much less condensation if you keep all rooms in your home warm most of the time. It is better to keep an even temperature throughout the day rather than heating your home up from a cold start each time.

If your heating is off for long periods the temperature drops and condensation will form. It may cost a bit more in the short term, but leaving your heating on at a lower level will reduce condensation, damp and the likelihood of mould forming.

Drying Clothes Indoors

If you are drying clothes, open a window nearby to allow air to circulate, otherwise condensation will increase. If you are using a tumble dryer, it is important that it vents to the outside.

Cupboards & Wardrobes

Allow free air circulation by not placing wardrobes and furniture too close to the walls. Try not to overfill your cupboards and wardrobes to ensure air can circulate freely within them. You can fit ventilators in the doors, and leave a space at the back of shelves.

Chimneys

Never block chimneys as this could be dangerous. If you are covering a fireplace, you must at least fit an air vent to allow ventilation.

The takeaway message is that by simply reducing moisture production where possible and by keeping your house warm and well ventilated, this will reduce condensation and damp, and deny mould the conditions it needs to grow.

Additional information is available on the internet and from your local council. If you need further advice please phone Caledonia, or talk to a member of our staff.