

Innisfree

CONDENSATION AND MOULD

A guide to preventing and
dealing with household mould



Condensation and mould

In most cases, the cause of mould in homes is due to too much condensation and not with any structural fault or lack of repair.

Damp caused by lifestyle

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you can't see it. Condensation forms when water vapour inside your home is unable to escape. The amount of water vapour builds up in the air and, when it can hold no more, it liquifies on a colder surface (usually your windows). This starts off looking like a mist on the windows but, if allowed to continue, it will eventually form droplets of water. This is condensation.

You may notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath, or you take a cold drinks can out of the fridge and the surface starts to drip.

Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather, usually from October to April, whether it is raining or dry. It does not leave a 'tidemark' and appears in places where there is little movement of air. Look for black mould in corners of rooms, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. It will often form on north facing walls which don't get direct heat from the sun.

If the damp is not caused by a fault with your home then it will be caused by too much condensation as a result of everyday living. Here are some of the things you should check for:

- a lack of ventilation in the home as a result of not opening windows or vents
- extractor fans not being used
- steam from cooking or bathing/washing
- doors to bathrooms and kitchens being left open after use so moisture spreads throughout the home
- drying wet clothes on or in front of radiators
- tumble dryers not being properly vented
- large pieces of furniture being placed against walls, preventing air circulation
- not opening curtains or blinds, creating poor circulation around windows.



Where condensation is the cause of mould there are no repairs to cure it. The only way to cure it is by following the advice in this leaflet.



Recognising different types of damp

Rising damp, leaks from pipes or structural damp tend to leave a line or mark on the wall or ceiling and rising damp becomes more obvious in wet weather.



Damp caused by a fault with your home

Examples of problems that may cause damp and mould where a repair would help are:

- a leaking roof
- blocked gutters
- leaking pipe-work
- Defective brickwork or rendering
- defective damp proof course
- defects around window frames

To see if a repair is needed in your home, see the advice on page 7.

What causes condensation?

There are four main factors that cause condensation:

- too much moisture being produced in your home
- cold surfaces
- not enough ventilation
- the temperature of your home

You need to address these factors to cure the problem.

| Everyday activity | Amount of added moisture |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Two people at home | 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 |

Treating the mould

Firstly, treat the mould already in your home. If you deal with the basic problems of condensation, the mould should not reappear.

To treat and remove the mould, wipe down the walls and door frames with a fungicidal wash in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. Do not use bleach as this is water based and does



not actually remove the mould. Do not try to remove the mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning as this can increase the risk of respiratory problems.



Reducing the condensation

Doors

Keep internal kitchen and bathroom doors shut, particularly when cooking, washing or bathing – otherwise water vapour will spread right through the house and condensation will probably reach external walls and ceilings in the other cooler rooms particularly bedrooms.

Ventilation and windows

The more moisture produced in your home, the greater are the chances of condensation and mould, unless there is adequate ventilation. Nobody likes draughts, but some ventilation is essential. In winter, open the windows a little when they mist up. If you fit draught stripping, leave a space for a small amount of air to get through. If you have an extractor fan, use it when cooking or having a bath/shower to stop the windows getting steamed up.

Kettles and pans

Don't allow kettles and pans to boil away any longer than is necessary, and always put the lid on the saucepan.

Heating and insulation

You will get less condensation if you keep your home warm most of the time. It is preferable to keep a steady low level of heating throughout the day rather than heating your home from cold each time. Use the thermostats and/or thermostatic radiator valves (if fitted) to control your heating – this should also help to reduce your heating bills.



Reducing the condensation



Drying clothes

If you have no other choice but to dry your washing at home then it would be better to do so by placing the washing on a clothes airer located in the kitchen or bathroom, shut the door, turn on the radiator and run the extractor fan (if there is one provided) or open the window a little. If you have a tumble dryer which is not vented to the outside you must install a vent directly to the outside.

Baths & showers

Always remember to put a small amount of cold water in the bath before you turn on the hot tap. Do not run your shower for longer than needed.

Condensation

Always remember to mop up any condensation or water as it forms.

Cupboards and wardrobes

Don't overfill cupboards and wardrobes. Always make sure that some air can circulate freely by fitting ventilators in doors and leaving a space at the back of the shelves.

Chimneys

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



Is a repair needed?



Please check in and around your home to see if there is any evidence of:

- leaks from the roof, guttering, downpipes or soil and vent pipes
- blocked drains
- a leak coming from the flat above
- water penetration from around walls or doors
- leaks from sanitary ware (W.C, bath, basin)
- leak from the hot water cylinder
- leaks from under the sink or the washing machine
- leak from the stop cock or supply pipe work.

To control condensation remember these key points

- reduce the amount of moisture in your home
- improve ventilation
- open windows slightly to circulate the air round your home
- reduce the number of cold areas in your home
- use your room thermostat to keep the temperature no lower than 12 degrees and no higher than 21 degrees.



You should report any of the above to our Maintenance Team on 020 7625 1818 (Option 2) and we will arrange for attendance by one of our contractors.



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