

warm homes

Save energy, save money

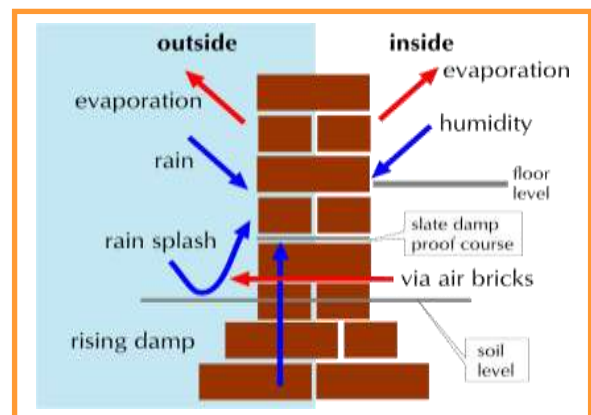


Advice for Tenants/Owners on Damp, Mould and Condensation

In the UK, the environment in the home where people live, work and play can become damp. Too much moisture in your home can lead to damp and mould conditions and is often due to condensation. However, condensation isn't the only cause of damp. It also comes from:

- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows;
- Rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing; spilling from a blocked gutter; penetrating around window frames, or leaking through a cracked pipe; and
- Rising damp due to a defective damp course or because there is no damp course.

Rising damp often leaves a "tidemark" and you should have the necessary repairs carried out to remove the source of damp. If you are a tenant you should advise your landlord of this cause.



Condensation

Are your wall surfaces, windows, furniture or clothing damp? Can you see black mould growing on them? If so, it is likely that you have a condensation problem.

Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather, whether it is raining or dry. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. It forms when warm moist air and steam are produced and the warm air comes into contact with, and condenses on, a cold surface before it can leave the building. Look for it in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. It often forms on north-facing walls.

How to avoid condensation

There is no immediate or easy solution but as the occupier you are responsible for balancing the three main factors, which are **Heating, Ventilation and Moisture**.



Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture quickly.

Moisture

These five steps will help you reduce the condensation in your home by producing less moisture:

- Cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Avoid using paraffin and portable bottled gas heaters as these heaters produce a lot of moisture in the air.
- Do not dry washing on radiators.
- Dry washing outdoors on a line, or put in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on.
- Tumble dryers must be vented to the outside.

Ventilation

You can ventilate your home without making draughts to reduce moisture:

- Keep a small window ajar when someone is in the room.
- If your windows have been recently renewed open the trickle ventilators provided.

- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by opening the windows wider, or better still, use a humidity-controlled electric fan if one is fitted.
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use, even if your kitchen and bathroom has an extractor fan. This will help prevent moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms, which are often colder and more likely to get condensation.
- Do not block air-brick vents.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes.
- Avoid putting too many things in cupboards and wardrobes as this stops the air circulating.
- Cut a ventilation slot in the back of each shelf or use slatted shelves.
- Where possible, position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.

Do not

- Do not block permanent ventilators.
- Do not completely block up chimneys. Instead leave a hole about two bricks in size and fit a louvered grille over it (this work should be done by a builder or specialist).
- Do not draught-proof rooms where there is condensation or mould.
- Do not draught-proof windows in the bathroom and kitchen.
- Do not tamper with any ventilation or extract unit installed within your property.

Heating and insulation

You can make sure that you have adequate heating and insulation in your home to reduce moisture:

- Thermal comfort ranges are very subjective. When at home, the ideal temperature usually ranges between 19-22 degrees Celsius in the living rooms, including the kitchen and bathroom, and 16-20 degrees Celsius in the bedrooms.
- When away from home, the temperature in the rooms should not drop under 15 degrees Celsius to avoid condensation and increased humidity levels.

- Do not heat up cold bedrooms in the evening by opening the door to heated rooms. The warm and humid air will condensate on the cold walls of the bedroom.
- Good insulation of the building creates warmer walls and ceilings, and therefore inhibits mould growth by preventing condensation from forming on them. Note: tight windows and buildings require more active ventilation.

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 fungicidal wash, which carries a Health and Safety Executive 'approval number'. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely.
- Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.

After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to prevent mould recurring.

Note: this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper.

The long-term solution to avoiding severe mould is to eliminate dampness.

You can carry out some of these measures at very little cost. However, if you are a tenant you may need the permission of your landlord.

If the above points are followed, condensation should not be a persistent problem in your home. However, you must remember that a balance is needed between these factors and you may need to experiment and persevere until the problem is resolved.

There are various grant, loan and discount schemes which may apply to you. You may even be able to get free insulation and a new heating system if you are on certain government benefits. If you are a tenant, your landlord may be entitled to heating and insulation grants. To find out more you can contact the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre on 0800 512 012.

