

Controlling Condensation and Mould in the Home.

What is condensation?

Every home gets condensation at some time. There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water appear. This is condensation. It is quite normal to find your windows to get misted up in the morning after a cold night and there is nothing much you can do to stop this. You also notice it when you see your breath on a cold day or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath.

Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather, whether it is raining or dry. It does not leave a 'tidemark'. 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, during cooking, washing clothes and bathing etc. 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.

Is dampness always caused by condensation?

Condensation is not the only cause of damp. It can also come from:

- Leaking pipes,



- Waste pipes or overflows, Rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing,
- Water spilling from a blocked gutter,
- Water penetrating around window frames,
- Rising damp due to a defective damp-proof course (dpc) or because there is no dpc.



Rising damp only appears in ground floor rooms and only to a maximum of 1m up a wall and this cause of damp often leaves a 'tidemark'. If a property has recently had some kind of repair carried out on it, it may be damp because the water used during the work (for example, in plaster) is still drying out. If a home is damp for any of these reasons, it may take weeks of heating and ventilation to dry out. Hiring a dehumidifier will help in the worst cases.

If it seems that the damp does not come from any of these causes, it is probably condensation.

How to avoid condensation

These three steps will help reduce the condensation in a home.

Produce less moisture

- Cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Avoid using paraffin and portable bottled gas heaters - these add moisture to the air.
- Dry washing outdoors on a line or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on.



- Tumble dryers must be vented to the outside air.

Ventilate to remove moisture

A home can be ventilated without making draughts.

- Keep a small window ajar when someone is in the room.
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms
- Explore the possibility of fitting an extractor fan.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes and avoid overloading them, as this stops the air circulating.
- Where possible, position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.
- If your windows have been recently renewed, open the trickle ventilators provided.

Insulate, draught proof and heat the home

- Insulation and draught proofing will help keep a home warm and will also cut fuel bills.
- Insulate the loft. Remember to draught proof the loft hatch but do not block any ventilation under the eaves.
- In cold weather, keep low background heating on all day, even when there is no one at home.
- Do not block permanent ventilators.
- Do not draught-proof rooms where there is condensation or mould.
- Do not draught-proof windows in the bathroom and kitchen.