

Condensation, Damp and Mould

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Tendring
District Council



1 What is condensation?

There is always some moisture in the area, even if you cannot see it. You notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when the mirror mists over when you have a shower or bath. Condensation is caused when moisture held in warm air meets a cold surface like a window or wall and condenses into water droplets. If this happens regularly, mould may start to grow. This usually appears on cold outside walls and surfaces and in places where the air does not circulate well. The moisture created can also damage clothes, furnishings and decoration. It leaves a musty smell. Condensation can aggravate health problems like asthma, bronchitis, arthritis and rheumatism.



2 What caused condensation?

Condensation usually occurs in winter because the building is colder and windows are opened less frequently so moist air cannot escape or circulate.

Condensation occurs when warm air collides with cold surfaces, or when there's too much humidity in your home. When this moisture-packed warm air comes into contact with a cold surface, it cools down quickly and releases the water, which turns into liquid droplets on the cold surface.

3 Is your damp a result of condensation?

Does it have 'tidemark' or 'wave' effect or leave a 'white, chalk residue? If the answer is yes, this is not condensation, it is damp. It could be caused by rain seeping through windows, or water flooding from a blocked gutter, or rising dampness due to a defective or missing damp proof course. Please contact us so we can investigate the problem. Our contact details can be found at the end of this leaflet.



4 Tackling the problem

There are three main ways to tackle the problem

One - Stop moisture building up

- Wipe down surfaces where moisture forms or settles.
- Cover boiling pans when cooking.
- When cooking, bathing or washing and drying clothes, close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into colder rooms, even after you have finished.
- Cover fish tanks to stop the water evaporating into the air.
- Dry clothes outside where possible.
- Do not hang washing over radiators.

Two - Ventilate, or air, the home

- When cooking or washing, open windows or use extractors.
- When drying clothes inside is necessary, do so in a small room with windows open.
- Open windows for a while each day or use the trickle/night vents.
- Do not block air vents, this is also important where gas and heating appliances are concerned as they need a supply of oxygen to work effectively and allow gases, such as carbon monoxide, to escape.
- Allow air to circulate making sure cupboards and wardrobes aren't overfilled and there is space between the furniture and the wall.

Three - Keep your home warm

- Draught proofing will keep your home warmer and help reduce fuel bills. When the whole house is warmer, condensation is less likely to form.
- Insulating your loft and walls will help. If yours are not insulated, please contact us to see if you are eligible or assistance with insulation or for advice on energy efficiency. Our contact details are provided at the back of this leaflet.

Always remember that you should NOT!

- Block permanent ventilators e.g Airbrick or trickle/night vents.
- Completely block a chimney. Instead leave a hole about two bricks in size and fit a louvered grille over it.
- Draught proof rooms where there is a cooker or fuel burner heater, for example, a gas fire.
- Draught proof windows in the bathroom and kitchen.
- Do not disturb mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning. This can increase the risk of respiratory problems.

5 First steps against mould

- Mould is a living organism and needs killing to get rid of it. To do this safely, wipe down affected areas with a fungicidal wash; one which has been approved by the health & safety executive, making sure you follow the manufacture's instructions. **Do NOT use bleach or washing up liquid.**
- Dry cleaning mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets. Distributing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk is respiratory problems.
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould reoccurring. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper.



6 The difference between damp and condensation

Damp occurs when a fault in the building's basic structure lets in water. There are two types of damp, penetrating damp and rising damp. Penetrating damp occurs when water is coming in through the walls or roof, (for example, under a loose roof tile, leaking pipes or waste overflow) or through cracks.

Rising damp is rare but if this occurs there is a problem with the damp proof course. This is a barrier built into floors and walls to stop moisture rising through the house from the ground. The usual evidence of rising damp is a 'tidemark' on the walls that shows how high it has risen. There is also a musty smell. If your home suffers from any of these damp problems, please contact the private sector housing team.

Contact

Private Sector Housing



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