

# Condensation and mould

## Managing condensation and mould

Condensation and mould can be a common problem, especially in older buildings. Condensation is often found as misted up windows or as small pools on window sills. How you live in your home will affect how much condensation is created. Mould can grow in any home, on any surface, so if you spot any mould in your home it is important to take early action as it can spread quickly.

***Please contact us and we can provide a kit to stop the spread of mould.***

### **What is Condensation?**

Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather, whether it is raining or dry.

Condensation happens when moisture in the air meets a cold surface. 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.

A build-up of condensation in your home can lead to serious problems with mould which can impact on your health and the condition of your home. Top contributors to moisture in the home include heating water, cooking, bathing, drying laundry indoors and the occupants themselves.

### **What is Mould?**

Mould more commonly forms on north facing walls which don't get direct heat from the sun.

Mould is caused by excess moisture. It can typically be found on and next to windows, in the corners and edges of rooms and behind and inside wardrobes and cupboards (especially if they are against an external wall). It can even grow on clothes, handbags and shoes if they are placed in wardrobes when still damp, wet or stored so tightly it prevents air from circulating.

Most problems with mould can be sorted out quickly if you find out where the mould is growing and clear it away. Below are some simple steps you can take to reduce the condensation that causes it to come back.



## **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 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.
- If you do not think the damp has arisen from a penetrating cause, then it is very likely to be caused by condensation.

Please call us to arrange an inspection if you think you think there is penetrating damp so that it can be repaired.

### **Treating the cause of mould**

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.

#### **1. Reducing moisture in the air**

You cannot always avoid adding moisture into the air, for example, when you cook or wash. In an average night, when asleep you can release a pint of moisture into the air just from breathing.

There are plenty of simple steps you can take to reduce the amount of moisture:

- dry condensation from your windows and sills each morning;
- you can buy condensation sponge strips in DIY shops, which when fitted to windows, collect moisture;
- hang washing outside to dry if you can;
- do not leave wet clothes/washing on radiators to dry or block radiator heat. It makes a massive difference if you use a clotheshorse or airer;
- if you use a tumble dryer make sure it is vented correctly;
- cook with pan lids on and turn the heat down when the water is boiling;
- run the cold water in the bath first to reduce steam by 90%;
- never use your gas cooker to heat your kitchen as it produces moisture when burning gas.

#### **2. Ventilation in your home**

Ventilation allows air to flow through your home. Condensation builds up when the moisture in the air cannot escape. It is all about getting the balance right. Take care to avoid over ventilating your home as too much cold air coming in will increase your heating costs and cause the temperature in the home to drop and increase condensation.

Below are some simple steps everyone can take:

- keep a window ajar where possible, even if just for a little while each day;
- open two windows at the same time on different sides of your home for around 30 minutes. If inside room doors are open at the same time it helps air to circulate;
- when you take a bath or shower, keep the extractor fan running and the windows shut or open bathroom windows to allow moisture to escape;
- make sure window vents are always kept open;
- if you have to dry clothes in the house, use the bathroom or kitchen with the door shut and a window slightly open or have the extractor fan running;

- when you cook in the kitchen use your cooker hood or extractor fan if you have one, leaving a window slightly ajar and close door to the rest of the house;
- if possible, place furniture against internal walls not outside ones which are much colder. Try to leave a gap between the wall and furniture to allow air to circulate around.

### **3. Heating**

- Aim to get the right heating in the right places of your home;
- Use your thermostat to help you keep heating at a steady temperature when rooms are in use (between 18-21 degrees Celsius is ideal);
- Try to find a comfortable setting that will give you the heat you need and does not increase your heating costs;
- In rooms that produce a lot of moisture, such as the bathroom or kitchen, having your heating on a constant low temperature can be very effective.

*If you do not treat the main cause, the mould will keep growing back.*

### **Tips for Clearing mould**

Request a kit from us or use a mould remover from a supermarket, DIY store or high street retailer as these are specifically designed to tackle mould. Some natural products such as vinegar or baking soda may help to tackle mould.

#### **Do:**

- open windows in the room you are cleaning but shut the door.
- wear protective gloves and a face mask, along with old clothes that you do not mind throwing away after removing the mould.
- carefully follow the manufacturer's recommendations and safety instructions for any product or mould remover you use.
- after clearing the mould, clean and wet wipe all surfaces in the room to remove spores that have spread. Dry any surfaces to remove excess moisture after cleaning.

#### **Do not:**

- use a vacuum cleaner on the affected area as this can cause it to spread further by transferring mould spores.
- use bleach as this can sometimes make the situation worse.
- use washing up liquid as it will not be strong enough to do the job.