Damp and mould

Mould and condensation can happen when the air in your home is too wet.

Condensation appears when warm, wet air touches a cold surface. This can happen at any time of the year. You might see it as mist or water drops on windows, walls, tiles, and other cold places.

Mould grows when tiny mould spores land on damp surfaces. These surfaces may be damp from condensation or rainwater. Mould often looks like small black spots, but sometimes it can be grey or green.

Water vapour is made by normal, everyday things you do in your home, such as breathing, sweating, washing, cooking, having a bath, drying clothes, and using fuel like gas or paraffin.

The main factors that cause condensation:

Too much moisture being made in your home

Not enough fresh air flow in your home

The temperature in your home

Cold surfaces in your home

Why is condensation becoming a problem?

Condensation is the most common type of damp, and it affects about **1 in 5** homes in the UK. Many things we do to keep our homes warm and save energy stop fresh air from moving around. This includes double glazing, draught excluders, and insulation in walls and lofts.

When warm, wet air cannot escape, it stays inside the house. This makes the air more humid, which leads to more condensation.

If a home is not aired out often, condensation can cause unhealthy living conditions. You might see black mould, peeling paint or wallpaper, damage to clothes and fabrics, or smell a musty, damp odour. If condensation is very bad for a long time, it can even damage the plaster and wood inside your home.

Health effects

Mould and fungal growth can cause health problems including:

- headaches
- skin rashes
- social well-being issues
- fatigue
- cardiovascular and respiratory illness
- sneezing

First steps to fight condensation

These are some simple things you can do straight away to help reduce condensation and stop mould growth.

- Dry your windows and windowsills every morning, as well as surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom that have become wet.
- Dry clothes outside, avoid drying clothes on your radiators. If it is raining you should dry your washing in your bathroom.
- Make sure the bathroom radiator is on, any window is ajar, the extractor fan is running and the door is closed.
- To reduce the risk of mildew do not overfill your wardrobes and cupboards as this stops air circulating and don't store clothes in plastic bin bags.
- Cross ventilation can help prevent condensation by opening a small window downstairs and one upstairs on the opposite side of the house, or diagonally opposite if you live in a flat.
- Avoid heating one room to a high level and leaving another room cold, this will increase the condensation in the unheated rooms.
- Don't cook with internal doors open and either put the extractor fan on or open the window
- After cooking, leave the window securely open and leave the extractor fan running to allow moisture to escape.
- Try not to allow food to boil in open pans, use lids to cover.
- Ventilate your home by ensuring that any vents, where fitted, are open and clean
- Run the cold water for a bath before the hot water. Leave the bathroom door closed whilst the bath is filling to reduce the spread of steam.
- Where possible avoid placing furniture against outside walls. If you do, ensure you leave a gap of at least 3 inches/ 75mm (roughly the length of a bank card) between your furniture and the walls of your home to allow air to circulate.

Did you know? The average condensation produced in your home each day is a mop bucket full of water!

Removing mould growth

If you do have mould growth in your home you should remove it as soon as it can be seen.

1. Wash the affected area thoroughly
Use a specialist mould remover/cleaner available from most supermarkets or DIY shops. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully, use rubber gloves. Apply to the entire area affected by the mould. Use a stiff brush or cleaning pad on cement-block walls or other uneven surfaces.

2. Rinse and dry
Use a damp cloth to rinse any residual detergent off the treated surface. A wet/dry vacuum cleaner can be helpful for removing water and cleaning items.

3. Disinfect
Disinfectants are intended to be applied to thoroughly cleaned materials and are used to ensure that most micro-organisms have been killed. Do not use disinfectants instead of, or before, cleaning materials with soap or detergent. A solution of 1.5 cup household bleach per gallon of water should be used as a disinfectant. Keep the disinfectant on the treated material for up to 10 minutes.

4. Clean up
Discard any loose porous materials where mould growth cannot be removed or has become ingrained into the material (e.g, ceiling tiles, plasterboard, carpeting, and wood products). Bag and discard mouldy items; if properly wrapped, items can be disposed with household rubbish.

Warning: Bleach and disinfectant should be handled with caution.
Bleach should never be added to ammonia or other chemicals; toxic gas will be produced.
Wear gloves, mask and eye protection when using disinfectants.
Bleach fumes can irritate the eyes, nose, and throat, and damage clothing and shoes.
Make sure working areas are well ventilated.

If you are concerned about damp, mould or condensation, please contact us on 0800 024 8968.

Before you call us, please make a note of the following:

- When did you first notice the damp, mould, or condensation?
- Have you observed any water leaks, drips, or wet patches?
- Which rooms are affected?
- Where exactly is the issue located (e.g. walls, ceilings, around windows, behind furniture)?
- Are you able to provide photos or a short video of the problem?
- Is anyone in the household vulnerable or affected by health conditions such as asthma or allergies?

Sharing this information helps us understand the problem quickly so we can send the right team to fix the problem sooner.