



## Dealing with damp, condensation and mould growth in your home

### CONDENSATION

Condensation can cause dampness and mould growth in your home. This looks unpleasant and can increase your risk of developing a respiratory illness. It can also cause wooden window frames to rot.

### WHAT IS CONDENSATION?

Condensation starts as moisture in the air and is usually produced by cooking, washing or drying clothes indoors on radiators. When the moisture hits cold surfaces, such as walls, mirrors, wall tiles and windows, it condenses and forms water droplets. The moist air rises when it's warm and often ends up on ceilings and in upstairs rooms where it forms mould.

### WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Left untreated, condensation can result in mould growth on walls, ceilings, furniture, furnishings, and clothing in cupboards and drawers. It can also affect wall plaster and cause woodwork to rot.

### HOW TO REDUCE CONDENSATION IN YOUR HOME

#### Produce less moisture

- Dry clothes outdoors whenever possible or put them in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open, or fan on
- Cover pans when cooking and do not leave kettles boiling
- If you have a tumble drier or washing machine to ensure that it is vented to external air in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- You must not use bottled gas or paraffin heaters as they produce a lot of moisture and are also a health and safety risk

### **Ventilate to remove excess moisture**

- Keep a small window ajar (if it is safe to do so) or a trickle ventilator open when someone is in the room
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when they're in use by opening the windows wider. When cooking or washing, let the steam escape by opening a window or using an extractor fan if you have one fitted. Leave the window open or the extractor fan on for up to 20 minutes after you have finished cooking or washing
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use, even if your kitchen or bathroom has an extractor fan
- Do not block air vents and allow air to circulate around furniture and cupboards
- Wipe down surfaces when moisture settles to prevent mould forming

### **WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF DAMPNESS?**

Damp is generally caused by a problem in the structure of the building. There are two basic types of damp:

- Penetrating damp happens when water enters your home through an external defect (for example, a crack in a wall or a loose roof tile)
- Rising damp is when there is a problem with the damp proof course or membrane and water rises from the ground into the walls or floor

### **INSULATE, DRAUGHT-PROOF AND HEAT YOUR HOME**

Insulation and draught proofing will keep your home warmer and also reduce your fuel bills. When the whole house is warmer, condensation is less likely to form.

- Insulate your loft and remember to draught proof the loft hatch
- Consider cavity wall/ external insulation
- Consider secondary and double-glazing of windows to reduce heat loss and draughts, and also ensure that there is some ventilation
- In cold weather, keep low background heating on all day, even when there is no-one at home
- The heating should be sufficient to whole of the property

### **SOME WORDS OF WARNING:**

- Do not block permanent ventilators
- Do not completely block chimneys; leave a hole about two bricks in size and fit a louvered grille over the opening
- Do not draught proof rooms where there is condensation or mould growth
- Do not draught proof a room where there is a gas cooker or a fuel-burning heater, such as a gas fire
- Do not draught-proof windows in the bathroom or kitchen

## FIRST STEPS AGAINST MOULD:

- Treat any mould you may already have in your home and then do what you can to reduce condensation. This will restrict new mould growth
- Do not disturb mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning. This can increase your risk of developing respiratory problems
- Wipe off mould growth immediately with water, but do not use washing up liquid
- To kill and remove mould growth, wipe down affected areas with a fungicidal wash. This is available from hardware or DIY stores, and supermarkets. You should choose a product that carries a Health and Safety Executive approval number'. Always follow the instructions carefully
- Dry-clean clothes affected by mildew and shampoo carpets
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould recurring. This paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper
- If you can afford it, buy a dehumidifier which will reduce the moisture level in the air and help reduce the growth and spread of mould spores

## USEFUL INFORMATION

You can get useful information on effective ways to heat and insulate your home from the Energy Savings Trust by telephoning 0800 512 012 or visiting [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

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