

# Condensation and Mould



There is always 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. Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather and it appears on cold surfaces and places where there is little movement of air.

## Why does condensation occur?

Think of a drink can, and how water droplets form on its cold outer surface. This is because warm water vapour in the air cools when in contact with a cold surface and changes into liquid water state. Similarly condensation can form in areas of the home for the following reasons:

- Too much moisture in the air
- Not enough ventilation
- Rooms without enough heat
- Cold surfaces because of poor insulation

## Sources of moisture

| Daily sources                 | Moisture emission per 24 hours (litres) |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 4 persons asleep for 8 hours  | 1-2                                     |
| 2 persons active for 16 hours | 1.5-3                                   |
| Cooking                       | 2-4                                     |
| Bathing, washing up etc.      | 0.5-1                                   |
| <u>Additional sources</u>     |   |
| Washing clothes               | 0.5-1                                   |
| Drying clothes                | 3-7.5                                   |



## What does it look like?

- Water droplets, dampness and often black speckled mould
- Not a clearly defined patch as with other types of damp

## Where will you find it?

- Kitchen/bathroom
- Cold surfaces such as windows
- Cold corners especially behind furniture
- Over filled cupboards and wardrobes
- Poorly heated rooms
- Uninsulated walls and ceilings

The reasons you will find condensation in these areas may be due to just one, or a combination of factors contributing to condensation. Condensation in the kitchen or bathroom is likely to be due to excess moisture in the air, whereas condensation occurring in a cold corner may be due to poor ventilation or a poorly heated room.

## Preventing condensation

### At no cost

- Cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling
- Avoid drying your clothes indoors

- Vent tumble driers to the outside
- Open windows to let out the moist air when you have been bathing, cooking or washing
- Keep your kitchen and bathroom doors closed to stop warm moist air travelling to other rooms in the house
- Keep a small window ajar or trickle ventilator open when someone is in the room
- Do not block up ventilators



### At low cost

- Use extractor fans
- Keep rooms warm when you are bathing, cooking and washing
- In cold weather, keep low background heating on all day, even when there is no one at home
- Avoid bottled gas fires, use your other heaters instead

### Mould growth

Mould grows where dampness exists usually caused by condensation, but it can be caused by dampness alone. Every home contains mould spores which are dormant and completely

harmless. Given the right conditions these spores will germinate and grow into black mould. Mould causes the spores to spread in the air and gives off a musty smell. Clothes, furnishings and carpets can be spoilt and mould can attack foodstuffs resulting in dangerous toxins.

### How to treat mould

First treat any mould you may already have in your home. If you then deal with the basic problem of condensation, mould should not reappear.

To kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash which carries a Health and Safety Executive 'approval number'. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely. Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets. Disturbing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk of respiratory problems.

After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould recurring. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper.

The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould is to eliminate dampness



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Hightown Housing Association Ltd. Hightown House Maylands Avenue Hemel Hempstead Herts HP2 4XH  
01442 292300 info@hightownha.org.uk www.hightownha.org.uk  
A charitable housing association.

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