WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

BE BOLD

Mould, damp and condensation

Your prevention guide



Funded by UK Government

Condensation and mould



What is condensation?

Condensation is the most common cause of damp in properties. It appears when moisture in the air comes into contact with a cold surface like a window or a cold wall.

We all get condensation on our windows from time to time. This isn't necessarily a problem if it clears up quickly. However, if left untreated, condensation can lead to mould growth on walls, ceilings and even furniture. It can also affect woodwork and plaster.

Condensation usually occurs in the colder months between September and April.

Where is condensation found?

Condensation is usually found in the corners of rooms, north facing walls, and on or near windows and external doors. Condensation can also occur in areas where there is little air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls.

The amount of condensation in a home depends on:

- **How much water vapour is produced**
- **How cold the property is**
- **How much ventilation there is in the house**



Where does moisture in the home come from?

Our everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes. Even our breathing adds some moisture.

One person sleeping adds half a pint of water to the air overnight and twice that amount when active during the day.



Here are some examples as how much water can be produced in a day:

- Two people at home can produce 3 pints
- Having a bath or shower can produce 2 pints
- Drying clothes indoors can produce 9 pints
- Cooking and using a kettle can produce 6 pints
- Washing dishes can produce 2 pints

Tips to reduce condensation in your home



Reduce moisture

- Where possible dry your clothes outdoors
- If you do have to dry clothes indoors, use a clothes rack and keep the room ventilated. Avoid drying clothes on radiators as this releases a lot of moisture into the air quickly making condensation more likely. If you use a tumble drier make sure that it is vented to the outside or is a condensing type
- Put lids on your pots and pans when you cook. This will also help reduce energy costs as your food will cook faster
- When bathing, showering or cooking keep the doors to the bathroom and kitchen closed, and afterwards too. If there are extract fans, then make sure you switch them on. Otherwise open the windows
- Use a cloth to wipe down condensation that forms on windows, then open the window for about 15 minutes afterwards

If you don't the moisture will collect on the frame and can cause damage. The moisture may also evaporate again during the day, raising humidity levels which makes condensation worse when the room cools down





Improve ventilation

Ventilation can help prevent condensation by removing moist humid air from your home and replacing it with drier air from outside:

- Open windows regularly – especially when cooking, washing or drying clothes
- Open a few windows throughout the whole house to help air move through your home rather than opening one window wide
- For low level background ventilation, leave window trickle vents open or use the background latch facility if you have these
- If you have a whole house mechanical ventilation system, then make sure you know how to use and maintain it correctly so that it works effectively. These systems need regular servicing and filter changes
- Clean out extract fans and ventilation vents so they do not become blocked with dirt and fluff as this stops them working effectively
- Move furniture away from walls so that air can circulate



Heating your home

- Keep your home heated to a temperature of at least 18°C. Different heating systems work in different ways so make sure you know how to use your system effectively
- Heat as many rooms in your home as you can. This will increase the whole house temperature and make condensation less likely
- Use thermal or lined curtains. Keep them open during the day and close them before dusk. This will capture free heat from the sun
- Improve loft and wall insultation. If your walls and ceilings are insulated, they are warmer and condensation is less likely to form on them. Insulation also stops heat escaping



Dealing with mould



- Don't disturb mould by vacuuming or brushing it
- Wipe down affected areas with an anti mould wash, following the instructions
- Bleach is not recommended as it does not kill the mould
- Don't use ordinary paint on the affected area
- Use an anti mould paint or wallpaper paste after treatment to help prevent the mould coming back
- Dry-clean clothes if you see mould/mildew on them
- Shampoo carpets that have mould on them

Other types of damp

Rising damp

- Rising damp is caused by water rising from the ground into the home. The water gets through a broken damp proof course or the brickwork if a property was built without one
- This type of damp only affects cellars and ground floor rooms and usually leaves a mark low down on the wall. This happens more in the winter
- If left untreated, may cause wallpaper to lift and plaster to crumble

Penetrating damp

- This type of damp is only found on external walls or, in the case of a roof leak, on ceilings
- It appears because of an issue outside the home such as missing pointing to the brickwork, cracked rendering, broken rainwater pipes or broken/ missing roof tiles
- Normally appears as a well-defined patch and feels damp to the touch.

It usually causes wallpaper to lift and paster to crumble



Defective plumbing

- Caused by leaks from water and/or waste pipes
- The affected area looks and feels damp



Points to remember

To control damp, mould and condensation in your home remember the key points:

- **Reduce the amount of moisture you produce**
- **Maintain an adequate temperature throughout your home**
- **Improve the ventilation in your home**
- **Reduce the number of cold surfaces in your home**
- **Consider installing insulation, for example, cavity wall insulation**
- **Ensure there is no rising damp, penetrating damp or defective plumbing**



Support available

If you are a homeowner

Seek advice from a specialist if you have a problem with damp in your home. Scan the QR code below for further information and advice.

If you are a tenant

You should report problems with damp and mould to your landlord. If they do not carry out the necessary repairs, you can ask the council for help.

Scan the QR code below for further information and to report damp and mould in your rented property.

You can also report issues by calling our customer services team on:
01923 226 400

Scan the QR code for further advice and information

Or visit our website at:
www.watford.gov.uk/damp-mould

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