



# Damp and moisture from condensation

Advice and information



**watford**  
community  
housing

This leaflet explains what condensation is and offers tips on how to reduce it, to help prevent problems with damp and mould.

# What causes damp?

Damp problems can occur as a result of moisture inside or outside your home.

## External dampness

External dampness – often caused by rain – generally results in damp patches on the wall or ceiling, and is caused by defects in the roof, gutter, cladding or windows. If you are aware of defects such as these, please report them to us so that we can arrange to repair them.

## Internal dampness

Internal dampness is caused by condensation and is sometimes harder to remove and prevent. It generally results in damp patches on the upper junction between the wall and the ceiling, or on lower corners of walls. When dealing with condensation it is important to tackle the cause of the problem as well as the symptoms, which can mean rearranging your home or making some small lifestyle changes.



# What is condensation?

## How does it form?

The air can only hold a certain amount of water vapour – the warmer it is, the more it can hold. When air comes into contact with a cold surface such as a mirror, a window or even a wall, the water vapour cools and will turn into droplets of water – resulting in condensation. This is what happens when mirrors mist up in the bathroom. It is quite normal to find your bedroom windows misted up in the morning after a cold night, and this is not indicative of a serious condensation problem.

## In your home

Every home experiences condensation at some time – usually when lots of moisture and steam are being produced. Cooking, washing, bathing and even breathing are just a few examples of activities that cause condensation.



## Excessive condensation

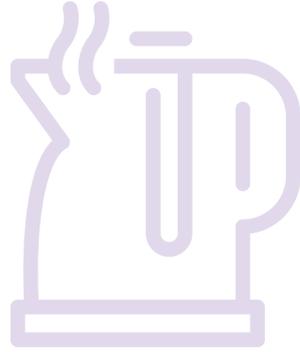
However, excessive condensation can lead to problems. It's often the cause of black mould on walls, furniture, clothes and curtains. The damp left by condensation will also damage plasterwork and timber window frames. Mould can even be harmful to your health, as well as not looking very nice, so it's important to try to tackle condensation.



# Where does moisture come from?

Did you know that when you sleep you add half a pint of water to the air overnight – and twice that amount when you are active during the day?

The table below shows how much extra moisture we produce through everyday activities over the course of a single day:



	2 people at home		3 pints
	A bath or shower		2 pints
	Drying clothes indoors		9 pints
	Cooking and using a kettle		6 pints
	Washing dishes		2 pints
	Bottled gas heater (used for 8 hours)		4 pints
	Total moisture added in 1 day		26 pints or 14.8 litres

# How can I reduce condensation?

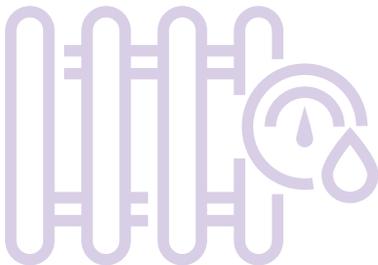
- Dry your windows and window sills every morning, as well as any wet surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom.
- Wring out clothes rather than drying them on a radiator.
- Hang your washing outside to dry if at all possible. Alternatively, hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or an extractor fan on. Don't put washing on radiators or in front of heaters.
- Always cook with pan lids on, and turn the heat down once the water has boiled. Only use the minimum amount of water for cooking vegetables.
- When filling your bath, run the cold water first and then add the hot – it reduces steam (which leads to condensation) by 90%.
- If you use a tumble dryer, make sure it is vented to the outside or that it is a new 'condensing' model.
- Don't be tempted to use bottled gas or paraffin heaters. These are not allowed under your tenancy agreement and they produce high levels of moisture.
- Increasing the ventilation in your home reduces condensation, so try to allow air to circulate and dry out by frequently opening windows. There is more information about ventilation later in this leaflet.
- Controlling the temperature is also important in keeping your home free of moisture. There is more information about controlling temperature later in this leaflet.



# Controlling the temperature in your home

Warm air holds more moisture than cool air and is therefore less likely to deposit droplets of water around your home. Keeping your home at a controlled, warm temperature will help reduce condensation.

- Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. It's better to have a medium-to-low level of heat throughout the house.
- It's cheaper to keep your central heating on at a low level than to use electric fires. It is also better to try to maintain a low heat than to suddenly try to heat the house twice a day from cold. If you don't have heating in every room, open doors in unheated rooms slightly to allow some heat into them.
- To add heat to rooms without heating installed, use electric heaters (like oil-filled radiators or panel heaters) on a low setting.
- If you have a freezer and keep it in a space that suffers from condensation, heat from its motor will help reduce condensation.
- Don't push beds or sofas against radiators as this prevents efficient circulation of warm air.





# Increase your ventilation

**Ensuring that your home is well ventilated is one of the most effective things you can do to keep your home free from damp. It reduces condensation by removing moist air from your home and replacing it with drier air from outside.**

- Reduce any condensation that builds up overnight by ‘cross-ventilating’ your home – opening a small window downstairs and a small one upstairs. These should be on opposite sides of the house (or diagonally opposite if you live in an apartment). At the same time, open the interior room doors to allow drier air to circulate. Do this for about 30 minutes each day to reduce overnight condensation in your home.
- Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom when cooking, bathing or washing up by opening windows – even if you only open your windows slightly, it can make a big difference. You can also use your cooker extractor hood or extractor fan to easily increase ventilation. Try to ventilate kitchens and bathrooms for at least 20 minutes after use.
- Keep your kitchen and bathroom doors closed whilst in use to prevent moisture escaping into the rest of the house.
- Ventilate your bedroom by leaving a window slightly open at night, or using trickle ventilators if you have them.
- To reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items, allow air to circulate around them by removing ‘false’ wardrobe backs or drilling holes in them. You can place furniture on blocks to allow air to circulate underneath.
- Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and, where possible, place wardrobes and furniture against internal walls. You could also pull shelves away from the backs of wardrobes and cupboards. Avoid overfilling wardrobes and cupboards as it restricts air circulation.
- Don’t push beds and sofas against outside walls, which are always colder and attract condensation. Instead, make sure there is at least a 9-inch (225cm) gap between the bed and the wall. Bedding can get damp if air cannot circulate around it.

As important as it is to ventilate your home, you shouldn’t over-ventilate either. Too much ventilation in cold weather reduces the temperature inside, making condensation more likely (and increasing your heating costs!). Also, make sure you always close your windows before you go out.

# What to do with mould

## Condensation in my home has led to mould growth – what should I do?

- To kill and remove mould, spray and wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash that carries a Health & Safety Executive (HSE) ‘approval number’ – you can often buy these in supermarkets. Make sure to follow the instructions carefully for safe use.
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint and a fungicidal resistant wallpaper paste to help prevent mould growth recurring. Please note: fungicidal or anti-condensation paint becomes useless if covered with ordinary paint or wallpaper!
- Dry-clean clothes that have mildew on them and shampoo any carpets. Don't try to remove mould by using a brush or vacuum cleaner as it won't be very effective.
- Once the mould is removed, reduce the levels of condensation using the tips in this leaflet to stop the problem reoccurring.







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