



Damp and Mould

Condensation, which causes damp and mould, is dampness that comes from water vapour in the air. It occurs to some degree in all homes but, if left unchecked, it can become a serious problem. There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. Lots of extra moisture is created by everyday activities such as cooking, washing clothes and bathing.

Condensation often happens because warm damp air from kitchens and bathrooms circulate into colder areas such as bedrooms. It occurs in cold weather, whether it is raining or dry. Condensation typically appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little air movement such as in corners, on or near windows or in and behind wardrobes and cupboards. The appearance of mould in these areas is often the first sign of a serious condensation problem.

- How much moisture is generated within your home
- The amount of ventilation
- How well your home is insulated
- The temperature of your home



Preventing Condensation

It is important to take steps to keep condensation under control. Too much condensation will make your home damp and unhealthy. House dust mites and moulds occur more in damp conditions and these are associated with allergic reactions.

Damp conditions can also cause damage to your home such as by causing windows to rust or rot, and plaster to perish. Decorations can be spoilt by damp and mould growth.

Both landlord and tenant are responsible for keeping condensation under control

The Tenant's Responsibilities

Reducing moisture production

- When cooking cover pans with lids and keep the kitchen door closed to stop wet air from circulating around your flat or house. Make sure a window is open or the extractor fan is on.
- If you use a tumble dryer make sure it is vented to the outside air
- If you have to dry clothes indoors ideally put them in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on.

Alternatively put them on a clothes dryer in another room but make sure the door to the room is closed and the windows are open.

- When bathing, run cold water into the bath first, then run the hot water. This will minimise steam production.

Heating your home

- Heat all rooms even if they are not being used.
- Do not place furniture or belongings in front of radiators as this will stop them heating the room efficiently.
- Do not use the heating on a high setting for short periods of time. Heating your home for a longer time at a lower temperature will keep your home warmer and cost you less.
- If you have central heating use the thermostat to control the heating by setting the temperature to a comfortable level.

The recommended temperature is 18 degrees C in your hall and 21 degrees C in your living room.

Ventilating your home

It is important to allow fresh air into your home otherwise the indoor air will become stale and humid, leading to unhealthy conditions.

- Always keep a small window ajar or a vent open when someone is in the room. It is best to keep vents open all the time.
- After you have had a bath or shower you need to open the bathroom window for a while until the steam has cleared, or alternatively use the extractor fan if you have one.
- When cooking make sure that the kitchen door is closed and either the extractor fan is on, or a window is open.

If your home is fitted with extractor fans they can be used to quickly remove damp air from the kitchen and bathroom where the most moisture is produced

Fans should be used whenever you are cooking or bathing. After you have finished in the bathroom or the kitchen leave the fan on for about 20 minutes to ensure that all damp air is cleared.

Some fans switch on and off automatically according to the amount of moisture in the air. Do not turn these off at the power switch as they are designed to work when they are needed. If you suspect that they are coming on more or less often than they should, then contact your landlord.

Do not switch off or tamper with any ventilation equipment provided in your home

Looking after your home

- Wipe down the inside of windows if they become wet with condensation.
- Try not to place beds and wardrobes against outside walls as mould is more likely to grow behind furniture.
- Don't put too many things in wardrobes and cupboards as it stops the air circulating.
- Remove small patches of mould that may appear on surfaces using one of the mould cleaning products suitable for that purpose. These are obtainable from supermarkets. Make sure that you use a product which carries a Health and Safety Executive 'approval number', and that you follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- When redecorating bathrooms and kitchens use a paint formulated for these areas.
- Do not decorate over walls or ceilings that have been decorated using fungicidal paint, with ordinary paints or wallpapers.

Report any repairs to your landlord / agent.

Your landlord has to meet certain obligations with regard to the structure of your home and the facilities provided.

- To make reasonable provision for heating.
- To ensure there is reasonable thermal insulation to the structure of the dwelling.
- To make provision for ventilation, such as to provide extractor fans and air vents where appropriate.
- To carry out any repairs your home in accordance with their legal responsibilities. Such as to ensure extractor fans and heating systems are in working order, and that there are not other sources of dampness such as plumbing or rainwater leaks. This includes defects to extractor fans and heating systems.

Environmental Health Department of the Local Authority

Your local EHO has legal powers to take action against certain disrepair and related problems. Environmental Health has a variety of powers to compel landlords to bring properties up to a reasonable standard. If they are satisfied a problem exists, they can issue a formal notice of what repairs are required. If the landlord fails to comply, the Local Authority have the power to do the works by default and charge the landlord the full cost. After contacting Environmental Health, an officer should inspect the property within a few days (although it may take longer depending on their work load) to evaluate the problem and decide on the appropriate way forward.

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