



*Promoting
Warmer Homes,
Healthy People*

Controlling Damp and
Condensation in your home

Promoting Warmer Homes, Healthy People Controlling Damp and Condensation in your home

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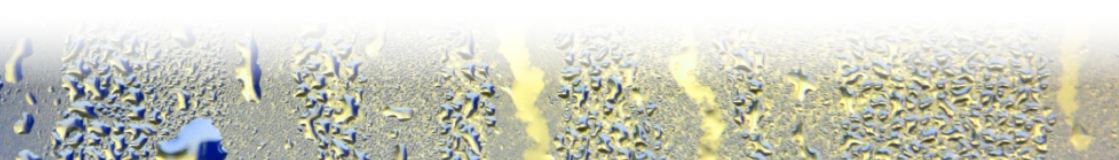
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Types of damp

Damp is one of the most frequently encountered problems in a home. There are three main causes of damp and it is important to know the differences between them so the correct remedy can be applied. A damp problem can affect your health and damage your home.



Rising Damp

The most obvious signs of rising damp are a brown 'tide-mark' stain on the wall and the plaster below feels cold or damp to the touch. It usually occurs when a property has either not been built with a damp proof course (DPC) or the existing DPC has been damaged or has failed. Rising damp affects walls that are in contact with the ground and can affect internal and external walls. The water does not normally rise above a meter in height up a wall.

If you suspect you have rising damp, you should have the property surveyed. Contractors who are members of the Trust Mark scheme or the British Timber Treatment and Damp Proofing Association can be found in Yellow Pages and at www.trustmark.org.uk. Always check the Trust Mark website for an up to date list of legitimately registered companies.



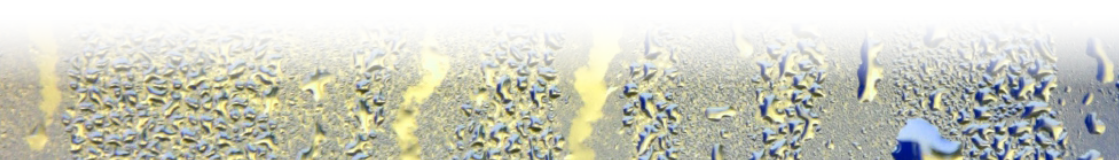
Plumbing problems

Problems can occur due to a small leakage over a long period or as a result of a sudden rush of water such as a burst pipe. This is usually seen as a well defined patch of damp on walls or ceilings.



Penetrating Damp

Penetrating damp happens when there is a defect in the outside skin of a wall or plumbing fault allowing water to enter the building, for example cracked rendering or faulty rainwater disposal. The resulting damp patch may be some distance from the original source of the problem and the problem tends to get worse in wet weather and may disappear after a long period of dry weather.



Condensation

Condensation occurs in cold weather, or on cold, hard surfaces such as bathroom tiles and windows. The moisture in the air also condenses on cold walls, particularly in the corner of two external walls in unheated rooms, behind furniture, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards and places where there is little air movement or poor ventilation. If left untreated the dampness caused by excessive condensation can lead to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes, curtains and soft furnishings and wooden window frames can rot.

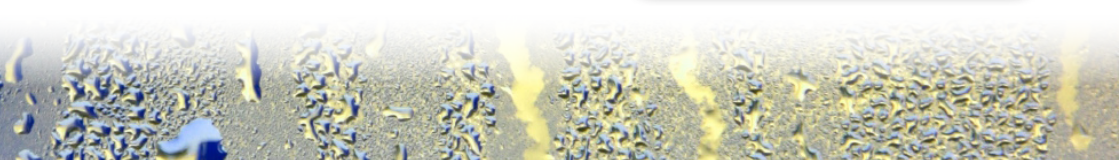
First steps against condensation

You will need to take further steps to reduce the problem of condensation in your home, but these are the basic things to do straight away.

- Dry your windows and windowsills every morning as well as any surfaces in your kitchen or bathroom which have become wet. Wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator.
- To kill and remove any mould that has started grow, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash that carries a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) approval number. These washes are often available from supermarkets. Always follow the manufacturer's instruction. Don't try to remove the mould by using a brush or vacuum cleaner as you may breathe in the spores or spread them around more. Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.
- After treatment, redecorate using a fungal resistant wall paper paste and a fungicidal paint.
- To really tackle mould and condensation you must get rid of the excess moisture in the air.

What causes condensation?

- Too much moisture being produced in your home.
- Not enough ventilation.
- Cold surfaces.
- The temperature of your home.



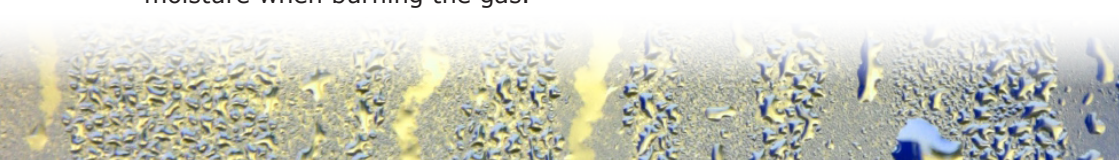
Everyday activities can add a lot of moisture into the air in your home;

- A bath or shower adds 2 pints of water.
- Drying clothes indoors adds 9 pints of water.
- Cooking and using a kettle adds 6 pints.
- Washing dishes adds 2 pints; and
- Using a bottled gas heater adds 4 pints of water (for 8 hours of use).

What can you do?

Reduce the amount of moisture produced:

- When possible dry your clothes outside or hang them in the bathroom with the door closed and the window slightly open. Avoid putting clothes on the radiator as all the moisture they contain will go into the room.
- Avoid using bottle gas heaters as they produce a litre of water for every litre of gas burnt.
- Cover saucepans when cooking. This also saves energy as food cooks quicker.
- Wipe visible condensation off surfaces such as windows and tiles with a dry cloth
- Keep bathroom and kitchen doors closed to prevent moisture escaping to the rest of the house. Use extractor fans in bathrooms and kitchens - they are not expensive to use. If you don't have extractor fans, open the window slightly and keep the door to the rest of the house closed, 20 minutes should be sufficient time for the moist air to escape, but remember to close them to keep your home secure.
- If you use a tumble dryer, make sure it is vented to the outside - remember to keep your home secure.
- Don't use your gas cooker to heat your kitchen as it produces a lot of moisture when burning the gas.



Appropriate ventilation

- If your windows have trickle vents use them to help ventilate your bedroom.
- Poor air circulation around clothes, stored items and furniture can lead to damp and mildew developing.
- Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls and where possible place wardrobes against internal walls.
- Don't overfill wardrobes and cupboards as it restricts air circulation and this can increase the risk of damp and mildew.
- Use the extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms. Bathroom extractor fans cost less than 1 pence per day to use, kitchen cooker hoods with an extractor and two lights will usually cost 3-4 pence an hour to use.
- When you do open windows to add ventilation, make sure that accessible windows will not cause a security problem and remember to close windows when you go out.
- Don't 'over ventilate' your home, especially in the room already suffering from damp and mould, the cold could make the problem worse and increase fuel bills.

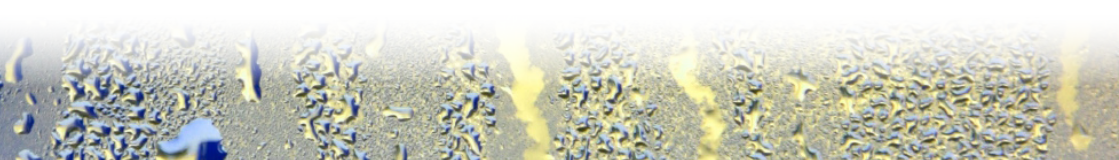


Insulation and draught proofing

Loft and cavity wall insulation are the most effective forms of insulation. The insulation will help to keep the surface temperature of the walls and ceilings warmer, reducing the opportunity for condensation to form.

Insulation will also help keep the heat within the home, helping to reduce heating costs.

Draught proofing can also help reduce heat loss but it is important not to draught proof rooms where there is a heater or cooker that burns gas or solid fuel.



Don't block up permanent ventilators or airbricks installed for heating.

Don't draught proof bathroom or kitchen windows.

The temperature in your home

When heating your home, try not to have one room at a high temperature and leave the rest of the property cold. The warm air in the heated room will always try to move to the cooler rooms and this will create condensation.

Keep the doors of unheated rooms open to allow some heat into them.

Don't use portable bottle gas heaters in your home, especially if you are already suffering from condensation problems. Litre for litre, bottled gas produces the same volume of water as the gas that is burnt.

Ideally your home should be heated between 18° to 21°C, but older people, babies and people who are less mobile may feel the need to keep their homes warmer.

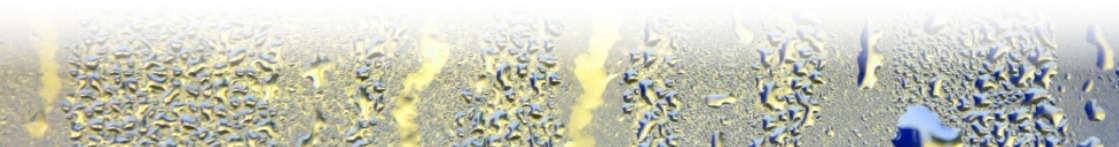
Key points to remember

- Use extractor fans in bathrooms and kitchens to remove moisture-filled air quickly, if fans are not fitted, remember to ventilate sufficiently and always keep doors closed to stop moisture from spreading to the rest of the home.
- Insulate your home to keep warm and cut the cost of heating
- Don't block ventilation needed for gas appliances to work safely
- Try to reduce the amount of moisture produced in the home e.g. covering pans when cooking
- Ideally keep your home heated between 18° to 21°C

Landlords and tenants

It is important that the tenant helps to reduce the condensation problems by taking steps to limit the amount of moisture produced in the property. Many of the measures needed to tackle condensation will also require the landlord to take action, such as improving the insulation of the property or installing ventilation and adequate heating.

If you have rising damp or penetrating damp, contact your landlord and ask them to carry out remedial work. If you do not get a satisfactory response from your landlord you should contact your local Environmental Health department for advice.



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For more information, call the Environment Team
at Huntingdonshire District Council
01480 388388

email: HEET@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

