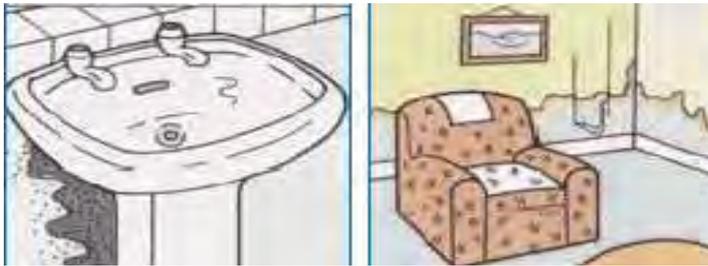


Your guide to damp and mould



1. Is your home damp?

Damp can be caused by a number of things such as disrepair to the structure of the property or drainage (gutters etc). If you see tidemarks or water stains on your walls or ceiling then you may have damp entering your property from outside.



You can check to make sure that there are no problems with the property, for example, missing tiles, missing pointing and leaking gutters. If the problem is at a low level your damp proof course may not be working effectively.

Some damp is caused by condensation. This leaflet explains how condensation forms and how you can keep it to a minimum, so reducing the risk of dampness and mould growth.

2. What is condensation?

Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather, whether it is raining or dry. It does not leave a 'tidemark'. It appears in places where there is little movement of air. You are most likely to find condensation in corners, on or near windows and in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. It often forms on north-facing walls but can occur anywhere if the conditions are right.

Condensation occurs when warm moist air is generated in areas like kitchens and bathrooms and then move to colder parts of the building. There is always some 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. You may notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath. Water vapour is produced in relatively large quantities from normal day to day activities - a 5 person household puts about 10 kg of water into the air every day (without taking into account any heating).

Condensation can cause mould on walls and furniture and make window frames rot. Damp, cold housing encourages the growth of mould and mites. Mites feed on moulds and both can increase the risk of respiratory illnesses in some people.

3. First steps when dealing with condensation

You will need to take proper steps to deal with the condensation, but meanwhile there are some measures you can take right away.



- Wipe down the windows and sills every morning. Wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator.
- Condensation channels and sponge strips can be bought at DIY shops. They are fitted to windows to collect the condensation and thus help prevent

timber window frames from rotting and avoid damp forming under the sills. Care must be taken to fit these devices properly.

4. First steps when dealing with mould

- 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. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper. When wallpapering, use a paste containing a fungicide to prevent further mould growth.
- The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould is to eliminate condensation.

5. How to prevent condensation

These four steps will help you reduce the condensation in your home.

i. Produce less moisture

Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly.

Cooking: To reduce the amount of moisture produced, cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling.

Heating: Paraffin and portable flueless bottled-gas heaters put a lot of moisture into the air - one gallon of gas or paraffin produces about a gallon of water. If you have a problem with condensation, try to find alternative means of heating.

Washing clothes: Put washing outdoors to dry if you can, or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on. It is best to fit a fan that can be switched to run continuously for clothes drying. If you have a tumble dryer make sure you vent it to the outside (unless it is the self-condensing type). DIY kits are available for this.

ii. Ventilate to remove the moisture

You can ventilate your home without making draughts.



Some ventilation is needed to get rid of moisture being produced all the time, including that from people's breath. Keep a small window ajar or a trickle ventilator open all the time if possible and

especially when someone is in the room.

- You need much more ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom when cooking, washing up, bathing and drying clothes. This means opening the windows wider. Alternatively, use a humidistat controlled electric fan (these come on automatically when the air becomes humid and are cheap to run).

- When you have a curtain or blind drawn, it makes the surface of the window cooler and increases condensation, especially with single glazed windows. Trickle ventilators can help reduce the problem.
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use even if your kitchen or bathroom has an extractor fan. It will help to draught proof these doors. Doing this will help stop the moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms, which are often colder and more likely to get condensation.
- Open doors to ventilate cupboards and wardrobes.
- Leave space between the backs of wardrobes and the wall.
- Allow space for the air to circulate in and around your furniture.
- Where possible, position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls, i.e. walls which have a room on both sides, rather than against outside walls.
- If you replace your windows make sure they are double glazed and fitted with trickle ventilators.

iii. **Insulate and draughtproof**

Insulation in the loft, cavity wall insulation and draughtproofing of windows and outside doors will help keep your home warm and you will have lower fuel bills as well. When the whole home is warmer, condensation is less likely to occur.



When draught proofing and insulating remember:

- Do not block permanent ventilators.
- Do not completely block chimneys (leave a hole about two bricks in size and fit a louvered grille over it).
- Do not draughtproof rooms where there is a fuel burning heater (e.g. gas fire) or cooker. Do not draughtproof windows in the bathroom or kitchen.
- If you live in a house, insulating your loft is a cost effective way of cutting heating costs. Remember to draughtproof the loft hatch but do not block any eaves ventilation. Cavity wall insulation is also an effective way of cutting heating costs.
- Many properties, however, are built without suitable cavities. If you are in doubt, you should seek the advice of a suitable professional.
- Secondary glazing of windows reduces heat loss and draughts but you must ensure that there is some ventilation and adequate means of escape in an emergency such as a fire. Remember that any alteration to your windows, including their replacement, must meet the relevant requirements of the Building Regulations. You

should consult your local authority on the need for Building Regulation permission before any work is undertaken.

iv. Adequate heating

In cold weather, the best way to keep rooms warm enough to avoid condensation is to keep low background heating on all day, even when there is no-one at home. This is very important in flats and bungalows and other dwellings where the bedrooms are not above a warm living room.

If you have central heating set it to provide background warmth in all rooms including unused rooms.

Alternatively install suitable thermostatically controlled heaters where necessary (do not use paraffin or flueless bottled gas heaters for this purpose). The thermostats will help control heating and costs. Remember to provide background ventilation at the same time.

6. Further advice

If you need any further advice about how to deal with damp, condensation or mould, please contact Housing Solutions on 01484 221350 or housing.solutions@kirklees.gov.uk

For further advice on making your home warm and energy efficient go to:
<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/>