

Controlling condensation in your home

August 2011



What is condensation?

Condensation occurs when warm moist air produced by ordinary household activities such as cooking, washing and bathing hits a cold surface such as a window or a cold wall. Unless the moist air can escape to the outside through an open window, air vent or extractor fan, it will continue to move around until it finds a cold surface where it can turn to liquid (or condense).

There is always some moisture in the air, even if it cannot be seen. If the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water appear. This is condensation. You notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when a mirror mists over while running hot water.

Condensation mainly occurs during cold weather regardless of rain or dry spells. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air - in corners, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. It can often lead to mould forming but does not leave a tidemark. North facing walls are often colder and therefore more prone to condensation.

Is it damp?

Condensation is not the only cause of damp that can affect buildings. Dampness can come from rain water or ground water, for example:

- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows
- Rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing, spilling from a blocked gutter, penetrating around window frames or leaking through a cracked pipe.
- Rising damp due to a defective damp course or because there is no damp course.

It can be difficult to be sure of the exact cause of dampness. However, condensation related dampness will often lead to mould growth on wall and ceiling surfaces, furniture and even clothing. Rising or penetrating damp will often leave a stain or tidemark due to white salt deposits.

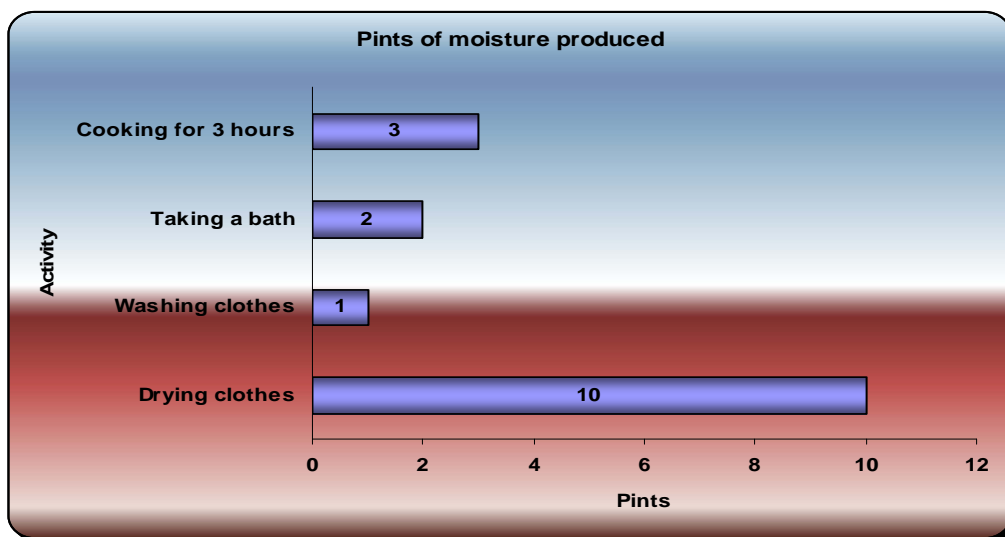
How to avoid condensation

The key to avoiding condensation relies on the right balance of heating and ventilation – heating to keep the building warm and ventilation to allow moist air to escape from the building. The following steps will help you reduce the condensation in your home:

Produce less moisture

Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly; here are some tips on reducing the amount of moisture in your home:

- Cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Do not use paraffin and portable flue-less bottled gas heaters as these heaters put a lot of moisture into the air and are against the Conditions of Tenancy.
- Dry washing outdoors on a line, or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on.
- Do not dry washing on radiators.
- Tumble dryers remove moisture from wet clothing and must therefore be vented to the outside. You will need to check your operating manual on how to vent your dryer. If your tumble-dryer is part of the washing machine, it will be vented automatically. Unless your dryer is ventilated directly outside you will still need to ventilate the room when the dryer is in use.
- Ensure that any condensation that forms on windows is wiped dry as often as it occurs. This will prevent the condensation collecting on the window sill and running on to the walls below and spoiling your decorations. Likewise, also wipe dry surfaces where moisture forms to prevent mould from occurring.
- Make use of extractor fans or cooker hoods where provided. If the extractor fans or cooker hoods have been supplied by the council and are not working, please report this to HFI Direct.
- Try putting cold water in the bath before adding hot - this reduces the risk of steam being created.
- If you have a combination boiler, adjust the thermostat at the boiler to get the hot water to a useable temperature without the need to add cold water.



Heat your home effectively

It is important to keep the property warm enough to reduce the risk of condensation. In cold weather it is recommended that you keep low background heating on all day. During this period do not turn the heating on and off manually; let the system's thermostat do this for you.

Other forms of heating such as storage heaters will need to be manually operated and it is advised that these be left on low to moderate settings for long periods of the day. Try and avoid having cold areas in the home. Try to ensure that the whole of the property is heated to a moderate temperature.

Ventilate to remove moisture

You can ventilate your home without making draughts:

- Use trickle vents and extractor fans where provided.
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by opening the windows wider. Leave windows open 20 – 30 minutes after bathing or cooking to get rid of the moisture, the use of an extractor fan will also aid this process.
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use, even if your kitchen or bathroom has an extractor fan. Closing the door is advisable as this will help prevent moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms, which are often colder and more likely to suffer with condensation. Likewise, keep bedroom doors closed to reduce the risk of moisture travelling to these rooms.
- Where possible, position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls and avoid placing furniture or heavy curtains in front of radiators.

Some words of warning

- Never block permanent ventilators, i.e. vents to windows, airbricks to walls and chimney breasts.
- Do not draught-proof a room where there is a cooker or a fuel burning heater, for example a gas fire.
- Do not draught-proof windows in the bathroom and kitchen.

First steps against mould

- Remove mould growth by wiping down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash, which carries a Health & Safety Executive 'approval number'. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely. Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets. Do not disturb mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning, which can increase the risk of respiratory problems.
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould recurring. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper.
- Take action and steps as suggested in this leaflet to prevent condensation recurring.

If you would like this document in another language, LARGE PRINT, audio tape, Compact Disc or in Braille please contact your area office:

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