

Hygrometer

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The hygrometer

This is a meter that measures the amount of humidity in the air as a percentage %. A thermo-hygrometer also measures the air temperature. Experts agree that control of condensation is a complex subject and there isn't one solution for all.

The science

The dew point is the temperature at which the humid air releases its moisture as condensation – usually on a cold surface. Humid air, produced by our day to day activities, will quickly find its “dew point” if you do not properly ventilate, or if you do not heat your home enough to raise the surface temperature of the walls above the “dew point” temperature. Finding the correct balance of ventilation and heating for your property is the key to reducing condensation in your home.

Best position for your hygrometer

Most hygrometers are portable. It may take half an hour or so for your hygrometer to acclimatise as you move it around the home. If you position your hygrometer in the kitchen or bathroom (source rooms) you will be alerted when you are producing a lot of moisture so you can take action. You may also position the hygrometer in the rooms affected by condensation and associated black mould. You need to consider where the moist air is coming from and deal with the source.

Reading your hygrometer

If the humidity reading goes above 60% there is probably too much airborne moisture in your home and you need to take urgent action to reduce the moisture in the air before it condenses on a cold surface.

Remember! Ventilate as required and heat your home effectively. You should routinely shut the door and ventilate when cooking or bathing - either open the window or turn on the extractor fan (not both at the same time) and check that the home is warm enough.

Use your heating

Aim to heat the whole of the property and try to maintain a constant temperature of between 19 - 21 degrees in cold weather. This will help keep the structure of the building above the “dew point” and reduce the likelihood of condensation forming on any cold surfaces. It is also important to avoid having cold areas in the home as these areas are where any warm moist air will migrate towards, condense and promote the formation of mould.

Experiment with the length of time you heat the home. Longer and at a lower temperature setting is more effective than short bursts of high heat. **Remember!** – If you are on a low

income and you are spending 10% or more of your income on gas and electricity bills your utility provider may be able to offer you a lower tariff or other help. Call them and ask.

Ventilation

If you are cooking, washing or bathing turn on the extractor fan or open the window immediately and close the door to stop airborne moisture migrating around the home.. Remember that ventilation is important however do not ventilate more than you have to as this can make it harder to effectively heat your home – particularly in very cold weather .

Using dehumidifiers

If you are using a dehumidifier please follow the instructions carefully. Don't be tempted to turn on the dehumidifier and open the window at the same time. You will just be drawing in any humid air from outside.

Other less obvious triggers of condensation

As well as cooking and bathing there are a number of other less obvious things that will contribute to condensation which you should look out for and report. Check that your water storage tank has a well fitted lid. Insulating service pipes e.g. in a water storage cupboard may prevent condensation forming on the pipes. If you use a tumble drier this should be properly vented to the outside and regularly maintained. Check the external vent and make sure fluff is removed from the filter/vent. If you dry your washing indoors this will produce moisture. Try moving wet washing into the bathroom or other room, close the door and ventilate. Check outside for areas where the external wall is getting regularly soaked e.g. from faulty guttering or an overflow from the boiler or WC and get this repaired. If you don't this will lower the thermal value of the structure and you could find that room is harder to heat, especially if it is already a cold north/west facing room.

Double glazed windows

Some people have experienced condensation problems after double glazing has been fitted. The internal glass in double glazed units may no longer be one of the coldest surfaces upon which moist air will condense. It is also possible that your old single glazed windows were ill-fitting and draughty, providing natural ventilation.

Double glazed units usually have built in ventilation. In general you should keep vents open. Once again experiment. If you are finding it difficult to heat the room you may want to close the vent but be watchful in case condensation occurs. If your windows do not have built in vents you will need to open the window to ventilate.

Cavity wall insulation

This will greatly improve the thermal efficiency of your home and help you save energy and money. Occasionally, depending on the structure of the building, cavity wall insulation can accentuate "cold spots" – e.g. areas of un-insulated solid concrete construction like a lintel over a window, concrete floor slab, projecting balcony or underground garages. Try having your heating on for longer.

Treating mould growth

Mould should be washed off as it appears with a fungicidal wash. You can buy many products off the shelf from many shops, supermarkets and DIY stores.

Tell us what works for you!

Call or email the Service Development Team on 020 7527 4123 or email service.development@homesforislington.org.uk