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Condensation, damp and mould advice

If there is too much condensation in your home and it's not dealt with properly, it can lead to mould on walls, mildew on curtains and fabrics, and can affect the health of people with breathing conditions.

REMEMBER – there is condensation in every home

Managing condensation and treating mould is a tenant's responsibility, unless it is caused by issues such as a leaking pipe, or missing roof tiles.

Condensation mainly occurs during cold weather, and it tends to appear on cold surfaces where there is little movement of air, such as in the corners of rooms, near windows, or behind furniture.

What is condensation?

Condensation is caused by moisture in the air.

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you can't see it.

When air gets colder it can't 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 bathroom mirror mists over when you have a bath or shower.

What causes condensation?

You are producing moisture all the time, simply by breathing.

Day to day activities produce the following amounts of condensation in your home:

- Two people = 3 pints
- Cooking = 6 pints
- Having a bath or shower = 2 pints
- Drying clothes = 9 pints

The three main causes of condensation are:

- Too much moisture in the air
- Not enough ventilation
- Difference in temperature

How to reduce condensation?

There are some simple steps to help reduce the amount of condensation in your home.

Reduce the amount of moisture in the air by:

- Putting lids on saucepans
- Drying clothes outside, or in a tumble dryer. If you must dry clothes inside make sure it's in a heated & ventilated room, and keep a window open to allow moisture to escape
- Make sure your tumble dryer is vented outside
- Don't dry washing on radiators
- Adding cold water to the bath first, to create less steam
- Don't use bottled gas or paraffin heaters as they produce large amounts of water vapour
- Mop up condensation every day

Stop water vapour spreading:

- Shut kitchen and bathroom doors when cooking or bathing
- Keep a small window ajar or trickle vents if you have them open at all times
- Use cooker hoods and extractor fans if you have them (the typical running costs are just £2-£5 per year), or open a window when cooking or bathing
- Don't block air vents
- Move furniture away from walls to allow air to circulate (you may need to move large items of furniture such as wardrobes and bed away from outside walls)
- Don't overfill cupboards or wardrobe

Heat your home:

- Maintain a constant heat throughout your house, even in rooms that aren't used
- Low heating on during the day rather than quick blasts of high heat should also reduce your heating bills. If you heat one room to a high temperature but leave others cold condensation will be worse in the untreated rooms
- Use thermostats to control your heating
- It may take some time, and trial and error before you can effectively manage the condensation levels in your home. It is essential that you wipe wet surfaces where condensation settles every day

How to treat mould?

It is your responsibility to treat mould in your home that is the result of condensation.

Use a fungicidal wash to clean affected walls, ceilings and paintwork. These are sold in supermarkets and DIY stores. Make sure you buy one with a Health & Safety Executive (HSE) approval number and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Empty cupboards and wardrobes that have been affected by mould and thoroughly clean all the contents

Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.

Once you have successfully eliminated the mould, redecorate using fungicidal paint and fungicidal wallpaper paste, however if you don't manage your condensation then mould is likely to return.

The only lasting way to avoid mould is to reduce the condensation in your home.

When damp and mould is our responsibility

The majority of damp and mould is a result of too much condensation in your home, which only you can manage. However, it could be the result of other issues, for example a leaking pipe or roof, or missing tiles or gutters. If this is the case, or you suspect it, then please contact us.