

# Dealing with Condensation



## This leaflet explains:

- What is condensation?
- Why do you get condensation?
- When is it a problem?
- How can you tell?
- What can you do about it?
- What else can you do?
- Dealing with mould growth

# Dealing with Condensation

## What is condensation?

Condensation occurs when the air around us is unable to hold any more water, and results in water being deposited onto cold surfaces, often attracting mould growth.

## Why do we get condensation?

All of our homes contain water vapour, and it is this which condenses onto cold surfaces when the air in the property can no longer contain it.

How much water vapour is in your property at any one time will be dependent on a number of factors:

- The number of people, pets and plants occupying the property
- The activities that generate water vapour – cooking, bathing, laundry, etc
- How the property is heated
- How the property is ventilated

There are a number of factors that can lead to the water vapour within your home condensing onto cold surfaces:

- Poorly insulated walls, ceilings, windows and pipework which provide cold surfaces for condensation to form
- Inadequate, poorly controlled, or expensive heating that does not maintain an adequate temperature in the home
- Poor ventilation – either too much, allowing surfaces to get too cold, or too little, allowing moisture (humidity) to build up and then condense in colder parts of the home
- High levels of moisture being produced in the home due to crowding and space problems and difficulty in controlling moisture (humidity), heating (temperature) and ventilation

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### When is it a problem?

Every home gets condensation at some time - usually when lots of moisture and steam are being produced - for example, at bath times, when a main meal is being cooked or when clothes are being washed.

It is quite normal to find your bedroom windows misted up in the morning after a cold night.

Mould growth often occurs where condensation is present. The most frequently seen mould is 'black mould' and will be seen in the coldest areas of your home with the least movement of air.

Please do not panic if you see a small amount of mould around windows or in shower cubicles, for example, especially at times when a lot of water vapour is present i.e., after bathing, in bedrooms in the morning etc.

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### How can you tell?

Are you sure it is condensation? - Dampness in your home may not be caused by condensation at all. It could be caused by leaking pipes, a leaking roof or rising damp.

Leaks often result in patches of damp coming through the plaster and wallpaper near where the leak is. Rising damp can be identified by a damp 'tidemark' low down on the walls indoors. Black mould is rarely seen on these water-affected areas.

Condensation, on the other hand, is surface dampness. It mainly occurs on cold walls indoors and other cold surfaces such as window reveals, corners of ceilings and cold-water supply pipes under sinks and wash hand basins.

Condensation is usually at its worst during the winter when the air is colder. It often results in black mould growing on walls and other surfaces.



Hygrometers (humidity readers) can be purchased fairly cheaply from places such as Amazon, eBay, etc and can provide an 'at a glance' way to check the level of moisture in your home.

The ideal range of humidity in your home is 40-65%. Anything below 40% or above 65% will feel uncomfortable.

If you find that your home is too dry, or too humid, you can use the moisture balance tool available on the links section in this leaflet to try and find ways to manage the humidity in your property more effectively.

If you cannot purchase a hygrometer, your landlord may be able to arrange to get one for you, or larger landlords may have access to data loggers, which are small devices specifically designed to monitor temperature and humidity.

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### What should you do if you have mould?

If you have a small amount of mould, like in the photograph below, it is reasonably safe to clean this with a fungicidal mould spray, which will be available in most supermarkets.

Bleaches and vinegar sprays will clean mould off the surface but may not kill the spores which means the mould is more likely to return.

If re-decorating, using anti-mould paints may help to prevent mould returning.



If you have textured wall coverings such as wallpaper, or mould has affected plasterboard or wood, this is much more difficult, and may require replacement of affected items.

**Please take care not to ingest large amounts of mould spores – especially if you have a sensitive respiratory system.**

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### What can you do about it?

#### Check your heating

How warm the walls, floors and ceilings of your home are, alongside how warm the air in the property is, will determine how much water vapour can be held before it condenses onto colder surfaces.



- Is your heating working properly?
- Is it cost-effective?
- Do all your rooms have space heating?
- The EPC will also indicate whether heating improvements are needed.

The general rule for indoor temperatures is to keep your home between 21°C in the daytime and 16°C at night-time. To avoid condensation problems, the temperature should not drop below 14°C.

Heating can be expensive, but there may be ways to reduce the cost of heating so that you can keep your home at a healthier temperature that reduces the risk of condensation and mould growth.

A switch to less expensive heating or better heating controls may be needed. Again, some funding may be available and, if you rent, speak to your landlord or letting agent.

If you have a condensing boiler, take the Money Saving Boiler Challenge found on the Links page at the end of this leaflet.

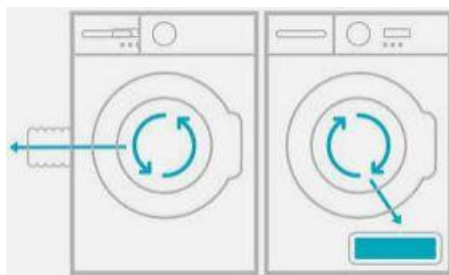
Be clear about the best approach to keeping your home warm by watching the video on our website. Big variations in room temperature should be avoided where possible to help reduce the risk of condensation and mould.

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### Carefully control moisture levels and ventilation

It is important to try and manage how much water vapour you have within your home.

- Where possible remove moist air from your kitchen and bathroom using extractor fans and trickle vents on windows
- Keep lids on your pans when cooking
- Dry clothing outside, or vent any laundry appliances such as tumble-dryers or heated airers to the outside
- If you need to dry laundry indoors, do this in a closed room where you can open a window – the bathroom is best
- Wiping down wet windowsills and frames every day when you wake up
- When showering, bathing and cooking, close the door to the room so that the moist air can't travel to other rooms including the bedrooms where it could condense and cause mould on colder surfaces



Be aware that too much ventilation can also be bad – a good rule of thumb, is that if you get cold from the windows or vents being open, it is likely to be too much.

If you rent and ventilation in your home is difficult to control then talk to your landlord or letting agent about making improvements

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### Check how well insulated your home is

If you have privately rented or bought your home within the last 10 years then it should have an energy performance certificate (EPC).

You can find your home's EPC on the EPC register using a postcode search. The EPC will include recommendations for where insulation needs to be improved.

Households with an income below £30,000 can apply for grant funding through Suffolk's Warm Homes Healthy People project. If you rent, talk to your landlord or letting agent about the need to improve insulation.

Links to both the EPC Register and Warm Homes Healthy People can be found on the Links page at the end of this leaflet.



## Dealing with Condensation

### Web Links

EPC Register (Website Form):

<https://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate>

Moisture Balance (Questionnaire):

<https://tinyurl.com/yc55ftzh>

Money Saving Boiler Challenge (Questionnaire):

<https://tinyurl.com/mrxfjktw>

Heat Geek - Should you leave your heating on? (Video):

<https://tinyurl.com/4ptmf7v7>

Warm Homes Healthy People (Website):

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/energy-efficiency-and-warm-homes/warm-homes-healthy-people/>

What is condensation? (Video):

<https://youtu.be/bj8KbcUC2wA>

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