

Condensation and mould advice for tenants

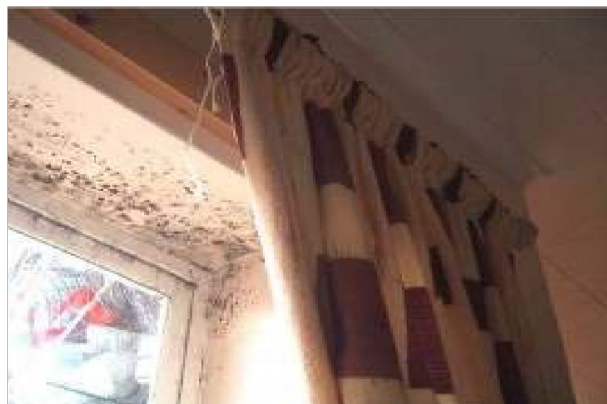
As the weather turns colder, condensation and mould can form more easily. We receive a significant number of reports of mould from October to March. Over the warmer months, there are barely any issues.

Are you experiencing condensation and mould on windows, walls or ceilings?

Do your windows look like this on a morning?



Are the window surrounds or bathroom ceiling going mouldy like in the images below?



If areas of the property look like this, it is almost certainly not a defect with the property itself, but a result of the way you are using the property. As the fault is tenant lifestyle, you will need to take immediate action to prevent further damage.

Preventing the problem in the first place will be far cheaper than the cost of the subsequent repairs.

Please read through the following information on the causes, effects and ways to avoid condensation and the resultant mould forming.

Please seek the advice of your landlord/letting agent before undertaking any remedial actions/measures.

What is Condensation?

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If air gets cold, it cannot hold all the moisture produced by everyday activities and some of this moisture appears as tiny droplets of water, most noticeable on windows on a cold morning. This is condensation. It can also be seen on mirrors when you have a bath or shower, and on cold surfaces such as tiles or cold walls and ceilings.



Have you ever noticed, you get more condensation on cold drinks if you're on holiday in a warm country? This is exactly the same principle, only when it is forming inside a property, it's a problem that requires tenants to take swift action.

If damage has been caused to the property because tenants have not properly managed condensation, then repairs can be charged to the tenants. However, by following this advice, you should be able to avoid any damage and thus avoid any associated repair charges.

Problems that can be caused by excessive condensation

- Dampness caused by excessive condensation can lead to mould growth on window frames/sills, walls, ceilings, furniture and even clothes.
- Damp humid conditions provide an environment in which house dust mites can easily multiply, which can affect asthma sufferers.

First steps against condensation

Dry your windows and windowsills **every** morning, as well as surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom that have become wet. Wring out the cloth in a sink rather than drying it on a radiator, otherwise the water vapour will go straight back into the air in the property.

First steps against mould growth

First, treat any mould in the property, then deal with the basic problem of limiting the amount of condensation you are creating to stop mould reappearing. To kill and remove mould, wipe down or spray walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash or very diluted bleach. Ensure that you follow instructions for safe use. Fungicidal washes are available at local supermarkets or DIY stores. Wash affected clothes and shampoo affected carpets (ensuring the room is well ventilated to assist drying).

Avoiding condensation and mould

The main factors that cause condensation in a property are:

- Too much moisture being produced
- Not enough ventilation
- Cold surfaces
- Temperature

You need to look at all these factors to cure a condensation problem.

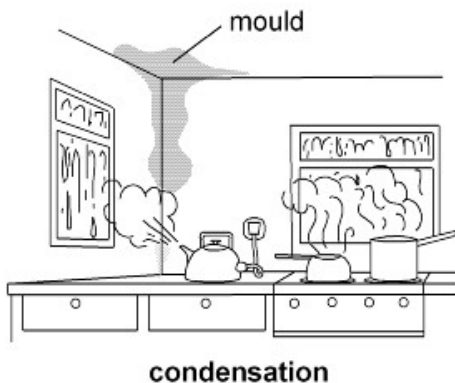
Too much moisture being produced

Our everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes. Even our breathing adds some moisture (breathing on cold windows and mirrors fogs them up) with just one person breathing out the equivalent of up to 4 cups of water per day! Here are a few other examples:

- 2 people at home (just breathing!) = 3 pints.
- A bath or shower = 2 pints
- Drying clothes indoors = 6 pints
- Cooking and use of a kettle = 3 pints
- Washing dishes = 1 pint
- Total moisture added in one day = 15 pints

This illustration is for a 2-person property. Imagine the increase if there are 6 people in the property breathing, showering, drying clothes, cooking and washing up?

Therefore, it is vital that you reduce the potential for condensation by producing less moisture;



- Hang your washing outside to dry if at all possible or hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or extractor fan on. Don't be tempted to put it on radiators or in front of a radiant heater.
- Always cook with pan lids on and turn the heat down once the water has boiled. Food cooks up to 30% faster meaning you're using less energy. Only use the minimum amount of water for cooking vegetables.

- Use a tumble dryer if there is one. If you choose to dry clothes on radiators, the extra cost of heating the resultant damp air in the property will far outweigh the cost of using a tumble dryer to start with.
- When filling a bath, run the cold water first then add the hot - it will reduce the steam by 90% which leads to condensation.
- Never turn bath/shower room extractor fans off by the isolator switch. They are usually on timers or movement sensors and are there to help you. By turning them off, you are likely to cause damage to the property and incur charges for repairs.

Ventilating your home is very important

Ventilation dramatically helps to reduce condensation by removing moist air from your home and replacing it with drier air from outside.

Reduce condensation build up by **cross-ventilating** your home. Open to the first notch a small window downstairs and a small one upstairs. They should be on opposite sides of the house. At the same time, open the interior room doors, this will allow drier air to circulate



Cross-ventilation should be carried out throughout the property for about 30 minutes each day. Air needs to be able to flow through the property like in the image above.

Note: Make sure that accessible windows will not cause a security problem. Remember to close them when you go out.

- Ventilate your kitchen when cooking or washing up. A window slightly open makes a huge difference to condensation. If you have one, use a cooker extractor hood or extractor fan if it is vented outside. Close the kitchen door to prevent steam entering colder rooms.
- Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom for at least 20 minutes after use by opening a small top window. Use an extractor fan if possible - they are cheap to run and very effective.
- Open curtains during the day to allow air to the windows and frames in order to prevent black mould.
- Ventilate your bedroom by leaving a window slightly open at night or use trickle vents if fitted. (But again, remember your security). Trickle vents are small plastic strips in double glazing frames. They look like the images below:



Leave these vents open at all times. They are there to help ventilate your home.

- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed to prevent moisture escaping into the rest of the property.
- To reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items, do not overfill wardrobes and cupboards, as it restricts air circulation.
- Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls.

Temperature inside the property

Warm air can hold more moisture than cooler air, which is more likely to deposit droplets of condensation around your home. Air is like a sponge; the warmer it is, the more moisture it will hold. Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. That means that it is better to have a medium level of heat throughout the house.

- Keeping the heating on low all day in cold weather will help to control condensation. It will also be more economic than having the heating on full blast for several short periods during the day.
- If you don't heat every room, keep the doors of unheated rooms open to allow some heat into them and air to circulate.

REMEMBER - the only lasting cure for mould is to reduce the amount of condensation you are creating by using the heating more and ventilating the property effectively. It's that simple.