

CONDENSATION — HELP & INFORMATION

What is condensation?

Condensation is an extremely underestimated cause of damage to our homes and is almost certainly the most common form of dampness within a building. It occurs where warm moist air comes into contact with cold air or a surface that it is at a lower temperature. When the moist air cools, it is unable to retain the moisture and is released to form condensation in the air or on the surface.

How is condensation caused?

The moisture in the air comes from a number of sources within the house. Water vapour is produced in relatively large quantities from normal day to day activities — a 5 person household puts about 10 litres of water into the air every day (without taking into account any heating) - i.e.

- Breathing (asleep) 0.3 litres
- Breathing (awake) 0.85 litres
- Cooking 3 litres
- Personal washing 1.0 litres
- Washing and drying clothes 5.5 litres
- Heating — especially paraffin and flueless gas heaters

Moisture can also be drawn from the structure of the building into the internal air; from below the floor or through the walls/ceilings.

How to spot condensation

Condensation is generally noticeable where it forms on non-absorbent surfaces ie. Windows or tiles, but it can form on any surface and it may not be noticed until mould growth, rotting of material, peeling of decorations or damage to clothes occurs. This is also normally coupled with a strong musty smell. If you come across any of these conditions, please read on to get free tips and advice on combating a condensation problem.

Where it typically occurs

The conditions for condensation exist in areas around the home with poor circulation and or high heat loss such as the following area:

- Cold surfaces (i.e. single glazed windows, mirrors and metal window frames)
- Cold corners of rooms
- Kitchens
- Bathrooms
- Built in cupboards
- Behind furniture against an outside wall
- Walls in an unheated room
- Unventilated bedrooms

How to control condensation

In order to try and keep your bills down and avoid excessive condensation treatments, there are various free condensation tips and measures you can adopt to try and minimise the problem. First of all, you need to ensure that the amount of moisture in the air is not excessive. Start off by trying the following measures:

- Keep the property well ventilated by opening all your windows on a daily basis to allow moist air to escape.
- If using the kitchen or bathroom, try to keep the door closed when possible so that moist or stale air is contained within the room.
- Try to keep a small gap between walls and furniture, particularly against 'cold walls' and allow ventilation of any cupboards to keep air flow moving.
- If drying clothes, it is always better to do it outside. If this is not possible, put them in an enclosed room with plenty of ventilation and keep the window open. If using a tumble dryer, make sure the vent pipe runs outside the property or out a window.
- While cooking, try to cover all pots and pans and avoid leaving anything on the boil for too long.
- Check to make sure airways within the property are not blocked, such as air bricks or chimneys.

- As it is cold air that causes warm air to release moisture, try to keep heating levels within your property at a constant temperature, especially in the winter.
- When people come in with wet coats, hang them outside the living area to dry.
- Use extractor fans where available.

Additional condensation checks

Sometimes, further condensation checks are necessary. If you notice any of the following please contact your Maintenance Manager immediately:

- Accumulation of rubble or debris near wall cavities.
- Leaks from roof.
- Leaks from or blockages of guttering and downpipes.
- Damp coming through solid wood floors.
- Leaking water pipes or tanks.