

Combatting condensation and mould

The number one cause of mould in the home is condensation. People often think they have rising damp or leaks, but generally the real issue is condensation. Here is how to tackle condensation and prevent mould.



Condensation - what is it?

There is always moisture in the air, even if you can't see it. Warm air holds moisture, cold air doesn't. Moisture from the air appears on cold surfaces as tiny droplets. That's condensation.

Condensation occurs particularly in cold weather - even when it is dry outside. It is seen most on windows and mirrors when you have a bath or shower but can form on any cold surface, including walls. Condensation is worse if there is no ventilation.

Condensation facts

It's amazing how much moisture we produce in a normal home.

- Two people breathing - three pints a day
- Having a bath or shower - two pints
- Cooking and using a kettle - six pints
- Washing up - two pints
- Bottled gas heaters - four pints
- Drying clothes indoors - nine pints

That's 26 pints of water a day. It's got to go somewhere and if it's on your walls and ceiling it's no wonder mould gets a foothold.

Top tips for reducing moisture and mould

- Hang washing outside to dry whenever possible
- In bad weather, hang your washing in your bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or extractor fan on.
- Never be tempted to dry clothes directly on a radiator - it creates a lot of condensation.
- Only use tumble driers vented outside or new condensing ones.
- Keep pan lids on and use as little water as possible in cooking or kettles.
- Ventilate your kitchen for 20 minutes after cooking and washing up. Keep a window open slightly and/or use your extractor fan if you have one as they are cheap to run and effective.
- Ventilate your bathroom during and for 20 minutes after you've had a shower or bath. Wipe down any wet surfaces.
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed to stop moisture moving on.
- Ventilate bedrooms and other living areas with trickle vents or a slightly open window (but close them when you go out.)
- Avoid using bottled gas heaters - they generate large amounts of moisture.
- Don't overfill wardrobes and cupboards. This reduces air circulation and causes mildew on clothes.

Cut cold surface condensation - internal rain

In cold weather condensation causes sharp changes in temperature from warm to cold. That's how rain works in nature. Balanced ventilation and heating keeps things constant.

- In cold weather keep the heating on low to medium for most of the day. Constant low level heat reduces condensation.
- Air movement helps cut condensation. Keep a gap between furniture and walls. Put wardrobes and furniture against internal walls if possible.
- If necessary, leave doors open to allow heat to circulate throughout the home (but always keep your kitchen and bathroom doors closed whilst in use.)



Treating mould growth

If you haven't been balancing temperature and ventilation you could have mould in the house. Prevention is better than cure but if you've got it here's how to treat it:

- Wipe down or spray walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash - available at supermarkets and DIY stores (these should have a Health and Safety Executive 'approved number.')
- Shampoo carpets
- After treatment redecorate using fungicidal and anti-condensation paint, available from DIY stores. Avoid using ordinary paint for further coats. This cuts effectiveness.
- Dry clean mildew affected clothes.

Once you have treated the mould make sure you apply all our top tips on condensation and ventilation - or it will come back again.



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