

Keeping your home free from damp and condensation

Is your home damp?

Damp is generally caused by a fault in the structure of the building. There are two basic types of damp:

Penetrating damp happens when water enters your home through an external defect. Examples are:

- A crack in a wall or a loose roof tile.
- Leaking waste pipes or overflows.
- Rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing, spilling from a blocked gutter, penetrating around window frames, leaking through a cracked pipe or from a leaking chimney.



This damp will often show as dark patches on walls and ceilings which get worse when it rains.

Rising damp occurs when there is no damp course or there is a problem with the damp course or membrane and water rises from the ground into the walls or floor.

Symptoms of rising damp are a tide mark usually up to 1 metre above the floor with peeling wallpaper and crumbling and salt stained plaster. Skirtings and other timbers may also show signs of rot.

These causes of damp rarely have black mould and often leave a 'tidemark'!

If you do not think the damp comes from any of these causes, it is probably condensation.

What is condensation?



Condensation occurs at any time but is most noticeable during cold weather; it does not matter if it is raining or dry. It starts as moisture in the air, usually produced by cooking, washing, or drying clothes indoors on radiators. When it hits cool surfaces such as walls, mirrors, wall tiles and windows it condenses and forms water droplets. The moist air rises when it is warm and often ends up on ceilings and in upstairs rooms which are cooler than the rest of the house. Condensation can be found in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards.

A typical family of four can produce 15 litres of this moisture every day. Persistent condensation can result in mould growth, which will show up as patches of black spots on walls and ceilings. Mould can also affect clothing, furniture and shoes where it will often turn them green.

First steps against condensation

You will need to take proper steps to deal with the condensation, but meanwhile there are some simple measures you can take right away.

- Open the windows a little to ventilate the room and let fresh air in every day.
- Wipe down the windows and sills every morning and wring out the cloth.
- Avoid drying clothes on the radiators in your home.
- Do not use an unvented tumble dryer.



First steps against mould

First treat the mould already in your home. If you deal with the basic problem, mould should not reappear. If you suffer with respiratory problems it may be best to get someone to do this for you.

To kill and remove mould:

- Wipe down walls and window frames with a good quality fungicidal wash, these can be obtained from most good DIY stores in the decorating aisle. If possible choose one that carries a Health and Safety approval number. Always follow the instructions carefully including the use of rubber gloves and face mask if required. Do not use bleach or bleach based products.
- Ensure all the mould is thoroughly cleaned and cleared before redecorating and walls are allowed to dry out for at least a week.
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper. When wallpapering, use a paste containing a fungicide to prevent further mould growth.
- Should any mould reappear, wash it off immediately with warm soapy water.
- Mould may be a symptom of something more serious which requires specialist attention. If you suspect this to be the case then report it to your local Housing Office.

The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould is to reduce condensation as much as possible.

How to avoid condensation

These four steps will help you reduce the condensation in your home.

1. Produce less moisture

Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly.

- To reduce the amount of moisture when cooking, cover saucepans and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Do not use paraffin and portable flueless bottled gas heaters as these heaters put a lot of moisture into the air – one gallon of gas or paraffin produces about a gallon of water.



- Put washing outdoors to dry if you can. Or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on.
- If you have a tumble dryer make sure you vent it to the outside; DIY kits are available for this. If it is a condensing dryer opening a window in the room it is in will allow for some extra ventilation when it is in use.

2. Ventilate to remove the moisture

You can ventilate your home without making draughts. Ventilation is necessary to get rid of moisture being produced all the time, including that from people's breath.

- Keep a small window ajar or the small plastic 'trickle' ventilator in the top of the window open when someone is in the room.
- Open the windows for a short while every day to 'turn the air over' and remove stale air.
- Ventilate the kitchen and bathroom when in use. This means opening the windows wider and using an extractor fan if you have one fitted. Leave the windows open, or the fan on for as long as possible after you have finished, or until the condensation has cleared.
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use. Doing this will help stop the moisture reaching other rooms like bedrooms which are often cooler and more likely to get condensation.
- Allow space for the air to circulate in and around your furniture. Open doors to ventilate cupboards and wardrobes leave space between the backs of wardrobes and the wall. Position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls rather than against outside walls, wherever possible.
- Do not block permanent ventilators they are there for a purpose.
- Use the plastic 'trickle' ventilators in the top of your windows as much as possible.



3. Insulating your home and draught proofing of windows and outside doors

Insulation in the loft, cavity wall insulation and draught proofing of windows and outside doors will help keep your home warm and you will have lower fuel bills as well. When the whole home is warmer, condensation is less likely.

4. Heat your home a little more

In cold weather, the best way to keep rooms warm enough to avoid condensation is to keep low background heating on all day, even when there is no one at home. This is very important in flats and bungalows and other dwellings where the bedrooms are not above a warm living room. Remember to provide background ventilation at the same time.

The council is committed to improving the energy efficiency of tenants' homes as part of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme. This is being done via a mixture of measures such as insulation and heating upgrades, along with the provision of extractor fans. If you have not yet had this work done it will be programmed as part of the delivery to achieving WHQS.

Points to remember

Produce less moisture:

- Cover saucepans.
- Dry clothes outdoors.
- Ventilate your tumble dryer to the outside.
- Avoid using paraffin or flue-less bottled gas heaters.

Ventilate to remove moisture:

- Ventilate all the time, especially when someone is at home.
- Increase ventilation of the kitchen and bathroom when in use and shut the door.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes.
- Do not block permanent vents.
- Keep 'trickle' ventilators open as much as possible.

Heat your home a little more

- If possible, keep low background heat on all day, with background ventilation.
- Find out about benefits, rebates and help with fuel bills.

If you are having difficulty with heating bills contact your energy supplier about alternative tariffs or contact our Tenancy Support Officers, through your local Housing Office, who may be able to help.

Further information and help with costs

For further advice please contact our Energy Advisor on Free phone 0800 0854145 who will be able to advise you about your entitlement to grant aid for improving the energy efficiency of your home.

If you are a council tenant and are aware of a defect which is causing a damp problem you should report the matter to your local Housing Office without delay.

BEWARE OF ANY DOORSTEP CALLERS WHO MAY SAY THEY CAN ASSIST YOU WITH GETTING YOUR REPAIRS CARRIED OUT, OR WHO FIND ISSUES THAT YOU DID NOT KNOW YOU HAD. If you are contacted, please take advice from either your Local Housing Office or the Council's Insurance Team before signing anything, as these callers are not always what they seem, and you may be signing a legal document for which you may personally incur legal costs. If in doubt, decline and contact us straight away. "NO COLD CALLING" stickers for your doors and windows can be provided by your Local Housing Office to stop any unwanted callers knocking your door.