

Condensation is a type of dampness. It is caused when warm, moist air hits a cold surface. You may be able to see water droplets on these surfaces. It is quite common to get condensation on windows in cold weather but it becomes a problem when the areas affected do not seem to dry out or become covered in mould.

Where is condensation found?

Condensation is often found on windows, tiles, on cold walls particularly in the corners, or behind furniture where there is not much air circulation. It is often found in rooms where there is a lot of moisture, for example the kitchen or bathroom, or in rooms that are not well heated, or do not have enough ventilation.

How do you know the dampness is caused by condensation?

There are a number of causes of dampness. A tide mark a few feet above the ground floor is most likely to be rising damp. Damp patches with definite edges on walls or ceilings may be penetrating damp, caused by problems with the outside of the building, letting rainwater in. This type of dampness gets worse in wet weather. Plumbing problems also cause damp patches.

If the dampness gets worse in cold weather, is on cold surfaces and may have mould growing on it, then it is likely to be condensation.

What causes condensation?

Not enough heating:

If your home is not very warm, the air and the surfaces will be cold.

Not enough insulation:

If your home is not well insulated the surfaces of the walls, ceilings, windows and sometimes the floors may be cold.

Too much moisture:

Moisture will always be created in the home by day to day activities, but large extra amounts are caused by drying washing indoors, boiling pans without lids, using unvented tumble dryers or using bottled gas or paraffin heaters.

The wrong levels of ventilation:

You need to get rid of the moist air as it is produced, so you need more ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom than other rooms.

Causes of Dampness

- Rising damp
- Penetrating damp
- Plumbing faults
- Condensation

Causes of condensation

- Inadequate Heating
- Inadequate Insulation
- Inadequate Ventilation
- Excess Moisture

Avoiding condensation

- Cut down the amount of steam produced in the home and let it out
- Keep your home warm and well insulated

Dealing with mould caused by condensation

- Wipe off with anti-fungal wash and paint area with anti-fungal paint
- Reduce the causes of condensation, otherwise the mould will come back

What you can do to help avoid condensation

Cut down the steam:

- Don't use bottled gas or paraffin heaters - they produce a lot of moisture.
- Don't leave kettles and pans boiling without lids.
- Dry washing outside wherever possible, or use a tumble drier with a vent to the outside

Let the steam out:

- Use extractor fans if you have them. The running costs are low and they are designed to get rid of the moist air as soon as it is produced.
- If you don't have extractor fans, open the bathroom or kitchen window slightly when having a bath, cooking, showering or drying clothes.
- Make sure air can circulate in cupboards, wardrobes and behind furniture.

Keep your home warm:

- To avoid condensation keep the home warm. Try to keep the chill off unused rooms.
- If your heating system has broken down contact your landlord or appropriate contractor.

Insulate your home:

- Loft insulation and cavity wall insulation help keep your house warmer. This will make the roof and walls warmer and reduce the risk of condensation.
- Double glazing can cut down condensation on windows but is expensive to install. D.I.Y secondary glazing is cheaper.

Dealing with mould:

- If there is mould growing on a wall or window sill, wipe it off using an anti-fungal wash (available from hardware and DIY shops).
- Re-paint the area with anti-fungal paint
- Remember, unless you get rid of the cause of the condensation, the mould is likely to come back.



Condensation & black mould in the corner of a room



FREE is a rural energy advisory programme, aimed at off-grid communities across England, and targeted at helping people in fuel poverty. The programme brings practical independent advice and information to residents regarding fuel choices, energy efficient technologies, and carbon reduction measures. It helps individual households to focus on reducing their fuel consumption and fuel costs, and also encourages local communities to work together to promote best practice in energy efficiency and carbon reduction.

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For more information please contact us at Cheshire Community Action on Tel: 01606 350042 or visit our website: www.cheshireaction.org.uk

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