

Condensation – how you can reduce it

Condensation occurs when warm moist air comes into contact with either colder air or a colder surface.

If the air is unable to retain the same amount of moisture the water is released in the form of condensation in the air or on the surface.

Physical examples of condensation are:

- Misted mirrors after bathing; or
- Misted glass on bedroom windows on cold mornings

Condensation is generally noticeable where it forms on non-absorbent surfaces, including windows or tiles, but it can form on any surface and it may not be noticed until mould growth or rotting of material occurs.

Condensation is most likely to form in places where there is little or no movement of air particularly in corners of rooms, on or near windows, and behind wardrobes or cupboards.

Usually it has an effect on properties between October and April, when there are periods of low ventilation throughout a property. During these months the weather is colder, and as a result householders tend to keep windows and doors closed to keep the property warm, but this increases the build up of water vapour in the home.

Condensation happens in every home, depending on how much water is produced inside and whether it can escape. It does not mean that there is anything wrong with your home and it is not the same as dampness, which means that water is coming into your home from outside.

Conditions for condensation

In Britain, condensation in houses is mainly a winter problem particularly where warm moist air is generated in living areas and then spreads to the colder parts of the building.

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 five person household puts about 10 kg of water into the air every day – that's over two gallons. Here's how:

- breathing (asleep) 0.3 kg
- breathing (awake) 0.85 kg
- cooking 3 kg
- personal washing 1.0 kg
- washing and drying clothes 5.5 kg
- heating - especially paraffin and flueless gas heaters.

For every litre of paraffin burnt over one litre of moisture vaporises into air. Every carbon fuel produces some amount of water from combustion. (1 kg of water equates to about 1 litre)

Modern life styles mean that many houses remain unoccupied and unheated throughout the greater part of the day, allowing the fabric of the building to cool down. The moisture producing activities are then concentrated into relatively short periods (morning and evening) when the structure is relatively cold while the building is still warming up.

What you can do to prevent condensation

You need to take sensible precautions to prevent and manage condensation because if left it can damage clothes, bedding and decorations. It can also cause staining and mould growth, especially in areas where there is little movement of air, such as behind furniture and in corners. It can also damage the building itself, causing timber to rot, especially if moist air is not allowed to escape.

Following these 3 steps below can help reduce the amount of condensation in your home:

Step 1 – Produce less moisture

Do

- Cover pans when cooking.
- Hang wet washing outside as soon as you can.
- Dry clothes outside wherever possible or if you insist on drying clothes indoors, do so in a closed bathroom with a window open and the extractor fan switched on.
- Make sure that if you use a tumble drier, it is properly vented outside.
- Close the bathroom door when washing or bathing and close the kitchen door when cooking. Let the moist air escape through the window and not into the house
- Ensure that any extractor fans fitted are always used and the grilles are cleaned regularly

Don't

- Leave kettles boiling.
- Dry clothes indoors.
- Use paraffin or potable flue-less bottled gas heaters; these heaters put a lot of moisture into the air – one gallon of gas or paraffin produces a gallon of water, so use a different form of heating.

Step 2 – Make sure the moist air can escape

Do

- Always keep the trickle vents open on your windows where possible.
- Use extractor fans in your bathroom and kitchen when bathing or cooking.
- Open the windows - air the house for at least 20 minutes a day, ideally first thing in the mornings.

- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes – open the doors regularly and avoid putting too many things in them as this stops air circulating.

Don't

- Cover or block airbricks or vents – they are there for a reason.
- Switch off extractor fans – let them work as they are supposed to.
- Let steam stay in the bathroom after you have had a bath/shower – open the window.
- Put furniture right up against a cold outside wall – move it away from the wall slightly – recommended 2 inches – so that air can circulate behind it, and if possible avoid positioning furniture alongside external walls.

Step 3 – Heat your home

Do

- Keep low background heating on all the time in cold weather, even when there is no one at home, this avoids condensation occurring when the heating goes off and as the air and surfaces cool.
- Report any broken heaters, radiators and extractor fans so that we can repair them.

Don't

- Leave any rooms unheated even if you don't use them – you only need a very low background heat to prevent condensation.
- Block any heaters or radiators with furniture or other belongings – you need to ensure that air can flow around them so that they can work efficiently.
- Disturb the loft insulation in your home or store things in the loft that compress the insulation.

Dealing with mould and moisture

- **Condensation on windows**

If you see condensation on your windows, simply wipe it away. It is important to do this regularly to stop any mould appearing on your window frames and on your window reveals. Make sure you dispose of the wet cloth or tissues outside of the room.

- **Mould**

If you see any mould, clean it off – use a proprietary mould and mildew cleaning solution readily available from many shops or a weak solution of ordinary bleach. To do this use one part bleach to 20 parts of water. **It's important not to leave mould** – if you don't wipe it away regularly, it can grow into soft materials such as plaster, which will mean that it will cause difficulty in decorating over it in the future.

Remember

Mild condensation is nothing to worry about and can be dealt with and managed by following the advice above. If you are adhering to the guidance offered but still concerned about

excessive mould in your home, please contact us and we will arrange for a survey to be undertaken at your home

- Does your home or any specific rooms feel unusually cold?
- Do you have concerns with damp in your property?
- Do you find it difficult to heat your home?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, please contact us and we will arrange for a visit to your home.

Contact us on 08082 027728 or 01209 20020, or email customer.services@coastlinehousing.co.uk