

A guide on how to keep your home free  
from damp, condensation and mould

Established 2003



Caring about...  
**Reducing damp,  
condensation and  
mould in your home**

**care  
network**   
caring about you, your home and our community

01254 507255

## Care Network is the accredited Home Improvement Agency for Blackburn with Darwen.

We are dedicated to helping you to live safely and with dignity at home, because we know that your home is more than just bricks and mortar.

Whether it's support for you or someone close to you, support at home or in your community, Care Network will do everything we can to inform you and connect you with quality services so that you can make choices that will help you to live a comfortable, healthy and independent life.



# **Caring about...**

## keeping you safe in your home

This guide contains important information on how to reduce problems in your home caused by damp, condensation and mould.

Damp housing encourages the growth of mould and mites which can increase the risk of respiratory illness so, as well as it being unsightly, there are significant health implications to damp and mould problems.

Condensation is probably the biggest cause of damp in homes. This booklet focuses on ways to identify and reduce condensation as well as treating the mould growth often associated with it.

# Damp...

## the statistics

Government figures suggest that **1 in 4 homes** in the UK **has an issue with either condensation and/or damp.**

Serious condensation and mould growth is the biggest damp issue and **account for 3% of all required house repairs.**

Around **five million houses in the UK are classed as being in a 'state of substantial disrepair'.**

**6% of the housing stock in the UK suffers from an excess of cold conditions** - especially those with damp built before 1919 and flat conversions. Many of these properties will not have adequate insulation or damp proofing.

# Types of damp

Typically there are three main reasons for dampness in your home. By understanding the difference between these, you can effectively treat the problem.

## Rising damp

Is caused by water rising from the ground and into the home. This is explained by not having, or by having a defective damp proof course. A tell-tale sign is that it usually leaves a tidemark on the wall, and this can typically rise up to around 50cm.



## Penetrating damp

Is usually caused by a defect outside the home such as missing roof tiles, defective pointing or cracked rendering, blocked gutters or cracked pipes. Other causes could be defective plumbing like leaking pipes, wastes or overflows. It usually results in a well-defined damp patch and is much more noticeable after a period of rainfall.

Rising damp and penetrating damp require more specialist treatment. Care Network has a number of quality assured tradespeople who could fix these problems for you.

## Condensation

Is caused by too much moisture that cannot escape from the home. When air gets cold, some of this moisture appears as tiny droplets of water, most noticeably on your windows on a cold morning. This is condensation. It can also be seen on mirrors when you have a bath or shower, and on cold surfaces such as tiles or cold walls.



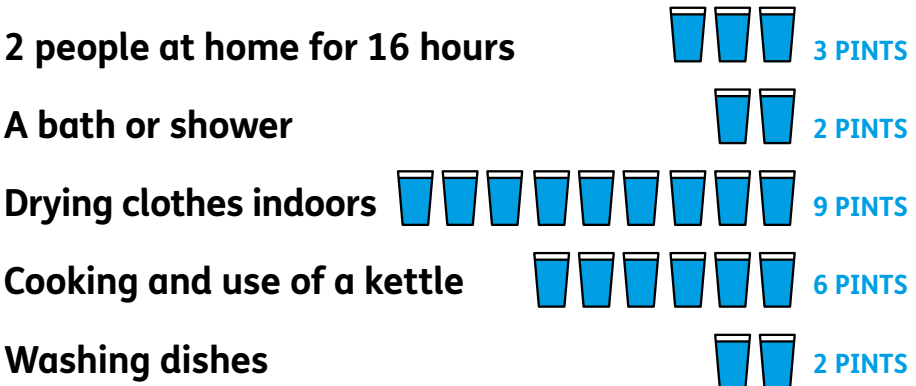
Condensation occurs in cold weather, even when the weather is dry. It doesn't leave a 'tidemark' round its edges on walls. If there is a 'tidemark', this dampness might have another cause, such as water leaking into your home from a plumbing fault, loose roof tiles or from rising damp.

Condensation, if left untreated, can result in black mould growth.

# How do we contribute to condensation?

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it.

Our everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes. Even our breathing adds some moisture (remember breathing on cold windows and mirrors to fog them up?). One person asleep adds half a pint of water to the air overnight and at twice that rate when active during the day. Try to reduce the potential for condensation by producing less moisture.



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## Total moisture added in one day



# What causes condensation?

There are four main factors that cause condensation:

- ① Too much moisture being produced in the home
- ② Not enough ventilation
- ③ Cold surfaces
- ④ The temperature of your home

You need to look at all of these factors to cure a condensation problem.

Look for condensation in your home. It can appear on or near windows, in corners of rooms and, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. Condensation forms on cold surfaces and places where there is little movement of air.

Simply turning up the heating will not sort out the problem; this may only temporarily reduce condensation. All three factors need to be looked at collectively to reduce the problem.

The first sign of a problem is water vapour condensing on windows and other cold surfaces, which then takes a long time to disappear, allowing surfaces to become damp. The second indication is black mould patches growing on these damp areas.



# Problems that can be caused by excessive condensation

Dampness caused by excessive condensation can lead to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes and other fabrics and the rotting of wooden window frames. Also, damp humid conditions provide an environment in which house dust mites can easily multiply. The presence of mould and dust mites can make existing respiratory conditions such as asthma and bronchitis much worse.



## First steps against condensation and mould growth

You will need to take proper steps to deal with condensation, but there are some simple things you should do straight away.

Mould spores are invisible to the human eye and are always present in the atmosphere both inside and outside the home. They only become noticeable when they land on a surface upon which they can grow and multiply. Black mould can grow on walls, ceilings, furnishings and even on clothes which can be expensive to replace.

## **To kill and remove the mould:**

- 1** Carefully remove excess mould with a damp cloth and then throw it away. Do not brush mould or use a vacuum cleaner as this releases spores into the air.
- 2** Wipe down affected areas using a fungicidal wash that carries a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) approval number or diluted bleach which can be bought at most supermarkets – remember always use rubber gloves and wear safety glasses. A simple saline solution, that can be made by pouring salt into boiling water until it no longer dissolves, also does the same job.
- 3** Tea Tree oil is a natural antiseptic and disinfectant but it's also great for cleaning, especially on mould or mildew. Dilute three or four drops of Tea Tree oil in two litres of water (hot or cold). Soak mildewed items in the solution or spray onto trouble spots using a plant mister. Wipe, then rinse off. Always ensure you carry out a test on a small area of the fabric/material/surface beforehand.
- 4** After treatment redecorate using a fungicidal paint or wallpaper paste – do not paint over using an ordinary paint.
- 5** Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.

Dry your windows and windowsills every morning, as well as the surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom that have become wet. Wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator.

**Remember: the only lasting cure for severe mould is to get rid of the dampness**

## How to combat moisture in your home

Whenever possible, remember to:



Hang your washing outside to dry if at all possible, or hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or extractor fan on. Don't be tempted to put it on radiators or in

front of a radiant heater

If you use a tumble drier, make sure it is vented to the outside or that it is of the new condensing type.



Always cook with pan lids on, and turn the heat down once the water has boiled and only use the minimum amount of water for cooking vegetables.



When filling your bath, run the cold water first then add the hot - it will reduce the steam by 90% which leads to less condensation.

Don't use your gas cooker to heat your kitchen as it produces moisture when burning gas. (You might notice your windows misting over). Wipe your windows and window sills every morning to remove condensation. This is especially important in the bedroom, bathroom and kitchen - just opening the window is not enough.



If you can afford it, a good dehumidifier is money well spent. These help to keep your home dry but they use electricity so you might want to think about putting it on a timer.

# Other top tips

## Ventilate to remove moisture

- It is important to remove condensation and excess moisture by ventilating your rooms. You can ventilate a room without making draughts or causing it to become cold. To do this, you may only need to open the window slightly or use the trickle vent that can often be found on new UPVC windows. This allows warm (but moist) air to escape to the outside and let in cool (but dry) air.
- Always ventilate or open a window when using the kitchen or the bathroom and close the doors to prevent moisture in the air from spreading to other parts of the house. If you have one use your cooker extractor hood or extractor fan. Continue to ventilate these rooms for a short time after a shower, a bath or cooking, and keep the door closed!
- Open bedroom windows for up to one hour as soon as you arise and throw back the sheets or duvets to air the bed and bedding.
- Do not completely block chimneys and flues – fit an air vent and make sure that you meet ventilation requirements for any gas appliances in a room.

- Help to reduce condensation that has built up overnight by ‘cross-ventilating’ your home for 30 minutes per day - opening to the first notch a small window downstairs and a small one upstairs. (They should be on opposite sides of the house, or diagonally opposite if you live in a flat). At the same time, open the interior room doors, this will allow drier air to circulate throughout your home. **Make sure that accessible windows will not cause a security problem - remember to close them when you go out.**
- To reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items, allow air to circulate round them by removing ‘false’ wardrobe backs or drilling breather holes in them. Pull shelves away from the backs of wardrobes and cupboards.
- Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls, and where possible place wardrobes and furniture against internal walls. Consider placing blocks under furniture to improve circulation. Avoid overfilling cupboards and wardrobes.

**Be careful not to ‘over-ventilate’ your home when it is cold, as it will cause the temperature inside to drop and make condensation more likely. It will also increase your heating costs.**

## **Insulate and draught-proof**

Insulation in the loft (ideally to a depth of 11 inches or 270 mm), cavity wall insulation and draught-proofing of windows and outside doors will help to keep your home warm and you will have lower bills as well. It may also be possible to insulate the walls of homes with solid walls. When the home is warmer, condensation is less likely.

When draught-proofing do not block permanent ventilators and do not draught-proof rooms requiring ventilation for fuel burning heaters or a cooker. It is also advisable not to draught-proof in a room where there is already condensation or mould.

## **Home temperature**

Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. Keeping the heating on at low all day and in every room in cold weather will help to control condensation, but keep a check on your meters to check how much it is costing you.

If you don't have heating in every room, you could keep the doors of unheated rooms open to allow some heat into them. To add extra heat to rooms without any form of installed heating, it is better to use electric heaters, for example oil-filled radiators or panel heaters, on a low setting.

Note: Gas and paraffin heaters are not ideal as they produce as much as five litres of moisture a day as the fuel burns.

Good heating controls on your radiators, room thermostats and a timer will help to control the heating throughout your house and to manage costs.

**To control condensation remember the following key points:**

- 1 Reduce the amount of moisture you produce
- 2 Improve the ventilation
- 3 Reduce the number of cold surfaces in your home
- 1 Maintain an adequate temperature



# Five essential steps to deal with condensation

Remember - Dealing with condensation is not easy. Only carrying out one or two of the suggested steps may not solve your problem. You need to do as many as possible every day, so that it becomes part of your daily routine and lifestyle.

**Remember the five essential steps:**



**Produce less moisture**

**Remove excess moisture**



**Ventilate to remove moisture**

**Heat your home a little bit more**




**Deal with black mould growth**


To see what you can do relatively cheaply on a DIY basis why not ask one of our Healthy Homes Liaison Officers to pay you a visit?

We can arrange to come round and help you to assess the damp, mould and condensation problems in your home and provide practical solutions to address these.


**Call us on 01254 507255....**

## Your friendly Healthy Homes Liaison Officer


Your general health and wellbeing 


 Your mobility around your home

The condition of your property 

 Your general safety


Fire safety 

 Keeping your home secure

How to stay warm at home 

 Outdoor areas



 Signposts and referrals to other services who can offer support



**Care Network believes that everyone is entitled to an independent, healthy and safe life.**

**Call our helpdesk on:**

**01254 507255**

**Visit us at:**

Care Network Hub  
9 Town Hall Street  
Blackburn  
BB2 1AG

**Opening times:**

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday  
Friday: 9am – 5pm  
Thursday: 9am – 3.30pm

**Website:** [www.carenetwork.org.uk](http://www.carenetwork.org.uk)

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