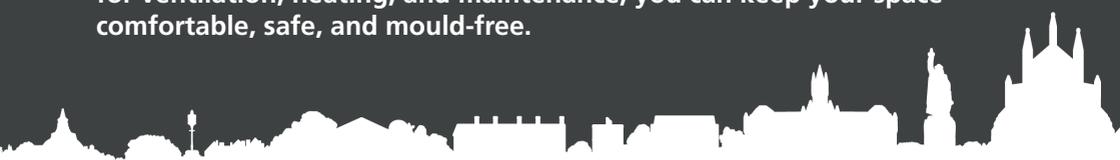


# Condensation, Damp and Mould

This booklet provides essential tips to help you prevent and manage condensation, damp, and mould in your home. With practical steps for ventilation, heating, and maintenance, you can keep your space comfortable, safe, and mould-free.



# Condensation, Damp and Mould

Many people mistake the results of condensation for types of dampness associated with building defects. This is rarely the case. Condensation is simply damp that comes from extra moisture in the air inside your home.

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. However, when it comes into contact with a cold surface it “condenses” into water. This is often why your windows, ceramic tiles, pipe work and sometimes even walls will appear to run with water.

Dampness and mould growth are one of the most common housing issues and can be responsible for a number of potentially serious health problems as well as causing damage to the

property, furniture, furnishings and clothing, etc. Damp also encourages the growth of mould and mites which can be the source of many health problems, including respiratory infections, asthma and allergies.

Too much condensation will make your home damp and unhealthy. It is important to take steps to keep it under control. These conditions can also damage your home by causing timber windows to rot or spoiling your paint or wallpaper (see Clause 29 of your Tenancy Conditions). Lots of daily activities produce moisture i.e. cooking, drying washing, running baths and the use of portable gas or paraffin heaters.



# TYPES OF DAMPNESS

There are four main types of dampness that could affect your home. It is important to understand the difference between them so that you can effectively treat the problem.

## 1. RISING DAMP

This is caused by water rising from the ground into the home. The water gets through or round a breached damp proof course (DPC) or passes through the natural brickwork if the property was built without a DPC. A DPC is a horizontal layer of waterproof material put in the walls of a building just above ground level. It stops moisture rising through the walls by capillary action.

Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms. It will normally rise no more than 12 to 24 inches above ground level (300mm to 600mm) and usually leaves a 'tide mark' low down on the wall. You may also notice white salts on the affected areas. Rising damp will be present all year round but is more noticeable in winter. If left untreated it may cause wall plaster to crumble and paper to lift in the affected area.

## 2. PENETRATING DAMPNESS

This type of dampness will only be found on external walls or in the case of roof leaks, on ceilings. It only appears because of a defect outside the home, such as missing pointing to the brickwork, cracked rendering, missing roof tiles and defective or blocked rainwater goods. These defects then allow water to pass from the outside to the inner surfaces. Penetrating dampness is far more noticeable following a period of rainfall and will normally appear as a well-defined 'damp-patch' which looks and feels damp to the touch.

## 3. DEFECTIVE PLUMBING LEAKS

Plumbing leaks from water and waste pipes, especially in bathrooms and kitchens, are relatively common. They can affect both external and internal walls and ceilings. The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch and remains damp whatever the weather conditions outside. A quick examination of the water and waste pipes serving the kitchen and bathroom and the seals around the bath, shower and sinks; plus, the external pipework, such as guttering will usually find the source of the problem.

## 4. CONDENSATION

While some damp is caused by a problem with the building itself for example through leaking pipes, a damaged roof, blocked gutters or gaps around window frames, many cases are caused by condensation.

Condensation occurs when moist air comes into contact with a colder surface like a wall, window, mirror etc. The air cannot hold the moisture and tiny drops of water appear. It also occurs in places where the air is still, like the corners of rooms, behind furniture or inside wardrobes.



### Did you know?

In an average week a family of four can add moisture to the air equivalent to 40 litres of water a week just by breathing, 20 litres by cooking, washing and bathing and 15 litres drying clothes indoors. To visualise this, there are four standard glasses of water to a litre.

# CONDENSATION AND MOULD GROWTH

Most homes will be affected by condensation at some point. However, certain activities can increase the problem. Condensation and mould growth is often due to habits and everyday living. Cooking, washing, drying clothes indoors, even breathing - all produce water vapour that can only be seen when tiny drops of water (condensation) appear on colder surfaces such as walls, windows, ceilings or mirrors.

The amount of condensation in a home depends upon three factors:

1. **How much water vapour** is produced by your actions
2. **How cold or warm** the property is
3. **How much air circulation** (ventilation) there is

Simply turning up the heating will not sort out the problem, this may only temporarily reduce condensation though short and high temperature blasts will increase condensation too. All three factors may need to be looked at 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.

## BLACK MOULD

Mould spores are invisible to the human eye and are always present in the atmosphere both inside and outside dwellings. They only become noticeable when they land on a surface upon which they can grow and then multiply. For mould to thrive and survive it requires four elements.

1. **Moisture** - obtained from condensation
2. **Food** - such as wallpaper or emulsion paint
3. **Suitable temperature** - courtesy of the householder
4. **Oxygen** – through breathing!

# CONDENSATION PREVENTION CHECKLIST

These steps can help to reduce the amount of condensation and thus black mould growth around your home.

- 1.** In colder weather try and keep temperatures constant between 16-21°C to avoid condensation problems. Do not block airbricks or air vents.
- 2.** Open window trickle vents during the day or when going out, or open windows for at least 10 minutes every day.
- 3.** Wash down any areas affected by mould with a proprietary mould killer following the manufacturer's instructions precisely.
- 4.** Wipe down the wet surfaces daily to prevent timber rotting and the formation of mould growth which can cause respiratory problems especially in the very young or elderly.
- 5.** Dry washing outside where possible.
- 6.** Don't dry clothes on radiators. This will make your boiler work harder to heat your house and cost almost as much as using a tumble dryer, whilst creating a lot of condensation leading to increased mould.
- 7.** If you need to dry clothing indoors, and don't have a vented tumble dryer place clothes on a drying rack in a sunny room where a window can be opened slightly and keep the door closed.
- 8.** No drying rack? Put your clothes on hangers and hang from a curtain pole above a slightly opened window; this can also reduce the need for ironing.
- 9.** Don't brush down mould as you may encourage the spores to spread and infect other areas.
- 10.** Always use an extractor fan if you have one. Contact WCC if you do not have one in your bathroom or if it needs a repair.
- 11.** Put lids on pans (this also reduces boiling times and helps save money). Only boil as much water as you need in a kettle to reduce steam and save money.
- 12.** Open windows during and after bathing/washing and leave them open for about 20 minutes if possible.
- 13.** Wipe down windows/mirrors/tiles/shower doors with a window squeegee and mop up the moisture with a super absorbent cloth which can be wrung out in the sink.
- 14.** Do not leave wet towels lying around.
- 15.** Do not put furniture, including beds, against any outside walls and try and leave a gap between the wall and furniture to allow airflow.

# VENTILATION

Controllable ventilation is important to help remove moist air and ensure good air flow in the home. Bathrooms and kitchens where moisture is generated by bathing and cooking should have extractor fans (preferably humidistat which activate when moisture in the air reaches a certain level). If you have them, ensure they are working properly (a good test is if a piece of paper 'sticks' to the vent when it is on, then it is actively drawing air outwards). They need cleaning and servicing from time to time. Contact WCC if you do not have one in your bathroom or if it needs a repair.

Windows should be regularly opened to ventilate. Most modern double-glazed units can be locked in a slightly open position for ventilation whilst maintaining security or have trickle vents. However, it's very important to ensure that windows are not left open for long periods during cold spells as this would allow the structure of the property to become cold, which can increase the formation of condensation and draw damp air into the home. Rather, ventilation should be used to purge damp air following activities that generate moisture (cooking, bathing, drying washing, sleeping etc) and to allow good air flow.

Keep furniture away from walls and don't overfill cupboards. Adding vents to built-in cupboards and wardrobes will help air circulation.

For further information visit [winchester.gov.uk/condensation](http://winchester.gov.uk/condensation)

## PREVENTION CHECKLIST



-   
Try to keep temperature between **18-21°C**
-   
Don't block vents
-   
Use fungicidal wash
-   
Dry washing outside where possible
-   
Air your home right through at least once a day

# Report damp & mould

**My Winchester Tenancy** -  
our Self-Service Portal for Tenants

[www.winchester.gov.uk/mywinchestertenancy](http://www.winchester.gov.uk/mywinchestertenancy)

E-mail: [hhub@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:hhub@winchester.gov.uk)

Call Customer Services on

**01962 848 400**



**Alternative formats:** If you have any particular needs which affect how you are able to use or be involved in our services or how you would like to receive information for example translation, interpreters, Braille, audio tape, large print, or sign language - please contact the Customer Service Centre either by:

Phone: **01962 840 222**

Email: [customerservice@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:customerservice@winchester.gov.uk)



**Winchester**  
City Council

