

## How to avoid condensation and mould in your home

During the winter months, many properties suffer from damp and mould growth due to condensation. Ugly black patches and a musty smell are usually the first signs.

Whilst there are things that landlords can do to help with the causes, like provide central heating systems and effective guttering, tenants have a responsibility in this area too, so please read on.

### Causes and signs of condensation

Air can hold moisture - the warmer the air, the more moisture it can hold. If moist air is cooled by contact with cold surfaces, such as walls, windows or mirrors, the moisture condenses into water droplets (known as condensation). Mould often occurs because of this condensation and is normally only a problem during cold weather. It appears as pinpoint black spots, usually on the side surfaces of external walls, in corners and in poorly ventilated spaces.

### Where does mould occur?

Everyday things like cooking, washing, bathing and even breathing create moisture which is released into the air.

Because of the high moisture levels in bathrooms and kitchens these are probably the most common areas affected. North-facing rooms, places with poor ventilation, like cellars, or basements and the rear/sides of cupboards or wardrobes can suffer too.

It's not just a problem confined to older properties either. According to the National House-building Council, the materials used to build a house take a long time to dry out properly and as a result, brand new homes can also be affected.

### How to reduce/prevent condensation

- pull wardrobes and furniture away from walls, and keep tops of wardrobes clear, to allow air to circulate
- close doors and open windows when cooking
- keep lids on saucepans when cooking
- keep bathroom doors closed when bathing, and open windows afterwards
- do not dry clothes on radiators, unless ventilation is increased
- In winter, keep your central heating on low rather than switching it on and off (the warmer you keep your home; the less likely you are to get condensation)
- vent tumble dryers to the outside of your home
- only use Liquid Petroleum Gas or paraffin heaters in ventilated rooms, as these fuels produce water vapour during combustion

In extreme cases, try the following:

- a dehumidifier, which extracts moisture from the air, can be bought or hired
- wipe down surfaces affected by condensation regularly to prevent mould growth
- mould can be removed by washing the surface with a disinfectant or a fungicidal wash. This must be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.
- mould-inhibiting paints and sprays can also help to reduce the effects of condensation.

## How to get rid of mould

The areas around showers and baths need particular care to avoid a mouldy takeover. Methods of mould removal will vary depending on the location of the stain.

To eradicate mould on tile grout, use a toothbrush dipped in bleach, or for a natural remedy, try diluted vinegar. A paste made from water and baking soda also works well. Leave to soak for 15 minutes then scrub like mad. Don't forget to rinse well afterwards. For a shop-bought solution, try Dettol Mould & Mildew Remover which is designed to remove even ingrained mildew.

Stained sealant around the shower or bath can be tricky to get rid of. If bleach doesn't shift it, the only solution might be to cut it out with a Stanley knife and apply new sealant.

### **Mould on shower curtains**

Treat mildew stains on shower curtains with a weak solution of bleach and water mixed up in a plastic bottle. Spray it on, then wipe off. Or after a bath, add soda crystals to the water and try soaking the curtain overnight for a more eco-friendly option without the pungent fumes! If you don't have soda crystals, use biological washing powder. Scrub any pesky bits of mould stuck in the hem or seams with a nail brush.

### **Mould on walls and ceilings**

Tackle mould on walls, window frames and ceilings with Polycell 3in1 Mould Killer. Spray the affected area well, then wipe away the mould with a cloth or sponge. Its powerful fungicide kills existing mould and discourages regrowth. The treated area can be repainted or papered once dry.

## Other causes of damp

We will inquire about these and be on the lookout during our termly property inspection visits, but if you should spot anything beforehand, then please let us know.

Check the following:

- all accessible plumbing for leaks
- guttering and down pipes for cracks and blockages, for example, leaves
- overflows and waste pipes under sinks for leaks
- possible roof leaks
- damaged outside walls or eroded pointing
- high garden or path levels overlapping the damp proof course

This type of damp is called penetrating damp, and generally leaves 'tide marks' and mould growth around the area of defect.

[Rentokil](#) has plenty more tips on preventing damp and condensation.

Right Letting Agents hope you found this hand-out useful. As a reputable letting agent we always encourage our landlords to fulfil their obligations in combating damp, condensation & mould. We also kindly ask that you do your best, as tenants, to help too.

Kind regards RLA