Pinnacle Group

VIVO Amey

Working with Defence Infrastructure Organisation

A guide to preventing condensation, damp & mould

Condensation is usually the biggest cause of damp within homes.

Introduction to Damp & Mould Growth

Condensation is caused by water vapour or moisture from inside the home coming into contact with a colder surface, such as a window or wall. The resultant water drops (condensation) may then soak into the wallpaper or paintwork or even plasterwork. In time, the affected damp areas then attract black mould that grows on its surface.

Condensation mainly occurs during the colder months, whether it is rainy or dry outside. It is usually found in the corners of rooms, north facing walls and on or near windows.

It is also found in areas of poor air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls. Note. Black mould is frequently seen on this type of dampness.

Most homes will be affected by condensation at some point. However, certain activities can increase the problem.

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

- 1. how much water vapour is produced by the actions of its residents.
- 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. 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.

Condensation and mould growth may be reduced or remedied without expensive works or treatments and dealing with the causes of condensation will often eliminate the mould problem.

Difference between damp and condensation

Structural issues are related to the fabric of the building which means water or moisture is getting into the home. Examples of the types of problems that occur include:

- Water leaks from windows, roof, downpipes, guttering, internal plumbing and flooding
- Penetrating damp through walls
- Rising damp – usually caused by non-existent or defective damp proof courses
- Wet or damp basements or crawl spaces

Condensation is caused by something happening inside the home, such as:

- High relative humidity in the air
- Too much water vapour or steam being generated through cooking, washing, showering and clothes drying
- Inadequate ventilation or not using the extractor fans, vents and windows that are available
- Inadequate heating or too much heat
- Inadequate cleaning and drying after major water leaks and bursts or floods

Common Household Moisture Producing Activities

The list below gives you some idea of how much extra water you could be adding to the air in your home in a day. Examples of Common Household Moisture Producing Activities:

Two **people** at home (16 hours)	**A bath** or shower	**Drying** clothes indoors	**Cooking** and use of a kettle	**Washing** dishes
				
3 pints	2 pints	9 pints	6 pints	2 pints

Warmth Versus Ventilation

Striking the right balance between warmth and ventilation is important and can be very effective.

By opening windows or ventilating your home it may appear that you are losing some heat, but what you are actually doing is allowing warm moisture-laden air to escape and permitting cool dry air to enter your home.

Dry cool air is cheaper to heat than warm moist air!

Using the trickle vents in double glazed window or opening windows slightly, will enable the necessary ventilation.

If opening windows the advice is to ventilate for an appropriate period of time, usually between 30 mins to 1 hour, not to leave the windows open all day.

Four Steps to Reducing Condensation & Mould Growth

1. Produce Less Moisture

Ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture.

To reduce this:

Dry clothes outdoors if possible. Avoid drying clothes indoors or if you have to, dry them on a clothes airer in the bathroom with the door closed and either an extractor fan on or a window slightly open.

Vent tumble driers to the outside (never into the home) or buy a condensing type.

Cover pans when cooking and do not leave kettles boiling.

2. Remove Excess Moisture

Always wipe the windows and window sills of your home every morning to remove condensation.

This is especially important in the bedroom, bathroom and kitchen - just opening the window is not enough.

3. Heating

In cold weather, the best way to keep rooms warm and avoid condensation is to keep low background heat on all day rather than short bursts of high heat when you are in the house.

4. Ventilation

It is important to remove condensation and excess moisture by ventilating 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. This allows warm moisture laden air to escape to the outside and let cool dry air into the property.

Tips to help with Ventilation :

• 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. Continue to ventilate these rooms for a short time after a shower, bath or cooking and keep the door closed!

• Open bedroom windows for up to one hour as soon as you get up.

• Clear window sills of clutter that will restrict opening the window and prevent surfaces from being wiped.

• Leave space between the back of furniture and cold walls for air to circulate. Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes, and avoid overfilling them as this prevents air circulating.

Remember: Only carrying out one or two of the steps may not solve your problem, you need to do as much as possible every day.

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