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**SevernWye**  
energy agency

# A guide to combating condensation



Condensation occurs when moist air comes into contact with a colder surface like a wall or window. The air can't hold the moisture and tiny drops of water appear. It also occurs in places where the air is still, such as the corners of rooms, behind furniture or inside wardrobes. Signs of damp include black mould (often in corners of rooms or behind furniture), rotting window frames, peeling wallpaper and a damp, musty smell. Not only does damp create an unpleasant living environment it is also bad for your health, particularly for those prone to allergic reactions or breathing problems.



## References



\*For details of the references used in this document please scan the QR image, visit

[www.warmandwell.co.uk/warm-and-well/advice-materials.html](http://www.warmandwell.co.uk/warm-and-well/advice-materials.html)

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## Causes of condensation

There are four main causes of condensation:

1. **Production of excess moisture in the home...**  
... from cooking, showering or drying laundry.
2. **Inadequate ventilation...**  
...meaning that moist air can't escape.
3. **Inadequate heating...**  
...because less water vapour can be held in cold air.
4. **Inadequate insulation...**  
...meaning the home is unable to retain as much heat and is more likely to have cold walls and ceilings.

## How to combat condensation

The best methods of combating condensation are linked to each of the four causes outlined.

1. **Produce less moisture by...**
  - Drying clothes outside
  - Ensuring your tumble dryer is adequately vented
  - Covering pans when cooking
  - Closing internal kitchen and bathroom doors when steam is being produced
  - Avoiding the use of paraffin and flue-less bottled gas heaters which release large amounts of moisture



## 2. Improve ventilation to allow moist air to escape by...

- Opening trickle vents in windows when rooms are occupied
- Opening windows for a few minutes several times a day
- Opening windows whenever they steam up
- Using extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms
- Leaving a gap between walls and furniture to allow air to circulate



## 3. Heat your home a little more

- While you don't want to waste money heating rooms you don't use, very cold rooms are more likely to get damp and mould. Set the thermostatic radiator valve to 1 in unused rooms so the radiator gives out a little bit of heat whenever you have the heating on. If you don't have central heating, consider using a room heater with a timer and temperature control. Remember, unused rooms will also need a good airing from time to time.

#### 4. **Insulate and draught-proof your home**

- Warm homes suffer less from condensation, so you should make sure your house is well insulated. This means insulating your loft to the recommended depth of 270mm (about 11 inches)\*1, and your cavity walls (if your house has them). Your windows and external doors should be draught-proofed, and you should consider secondary glazing (a cheaper alternative to double glazing) if your single glazed windows are draughty.

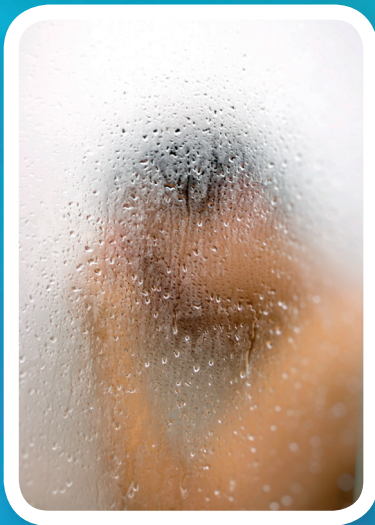


### Some further tips

- You can catch condensation dripping from windows with condensation channels and sponge strips (available from DIY shops).
- Wipe down windows and sills in the morning.
- In extreme circumstances you may need to invest in a dehumidifier. These really help but can be expensive to buy and larger ones can be quite costly to run.

## Getting rid of mould

If you already have mould on your walls and ceilings, it can be removed. An effective method is to start by cleaning off the mould with spray containing bleach. This will help remove the staining that mould can leave behind. Leave to dry overnight and then spray the affected area with an anti-fungal wash and allow that to dry. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions and consider wearing a face mask when spraying. You could also treat the affected area with a mould resistant paint, available from most DIY stores.



## Other causes of damp

If none of the above steps help, it may be that the damp isn't being caused by condensation. There are other causes of damp, the most common of which are:

### **Penetrating damp**

Penetrating damp is caused by moisture entering the house through leaking pipes, a damaged roof, blocked gutters, gaps around window frames and cracked or defective rendering and brickwork. Remedying these structural problems should get rid of the damp.

### **Rising damp**

Rising damp is due to a defective (or non-existent) damp course. This will leave a 'tide mark' about 1m above the floor. This issue needs to be addressed by a qualified professional.

### **New homes**

Also bear in mind that newly built homes can sometimes feel damp because the water used during construction (in cement, plaster etc.) is still drying out.



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