

Pembrokeshire County Council



# A Guide to Managing Condensation and Mould in your Home

Pembrokeshire County Council

**[www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk](http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk)**

Leaflets also available in Welsh

# What is the difference between damp, condensation and mould?

## Damp

Damp can either be caused by a fault in the basic structure of your home that allows water to come in from the outside, or by a leak from the plumbing in your home (central heating, water or waste water pipes).

The water may be coming in through the walls, the roof or from water rising through the house from the ground. When this happens there is usually a 'tide mark' on the walls that shows how high the water has risen.



## Condensation

Condensation occurs when warm moist air meets a cold surface.

Ordinary household activities, such as cooking and bathing, can produce condensation when warm air meets outside walls or windows.

There is always some moisture in the air, even if it cannot be seen. When air cools it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny droplets of water appear.

If moist air cannot escape through an open window or air vent, it will move around the home until it finds a cold spot where it will become condensation.

This may lead to mould growth. Mould does not necessarily grow in the same place as the moisture comes from.

## Mould

Mould spores are always in the air. Growth appears when mould spores germinate on contact with surfaces that are damp through condensation or rain water penetration. The mould takes on the appearance of small black, grey or green spots on walls or other surfaces.



## 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, worse.

## The four main factors that cause condensation

- Too much moisture being produced in the home
- Not enough ventilation
- Cold surfaces
- Temperature of the home.

To control condensation there needs to be a balance between moisture, ventilation, insulation and heating.

### Moisture in the home

The following illustrates the amount of moisture produced by everyday activities:

Everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes. One person just living and breathing in a house can add up to 1.5 pints of moisture into the air every day.

A bath or shower  
**2 pints**



Washing clothes  
**1 pint**



Drying clothes indoors  
**9 pints**



Cooking and use of kettle  
**6 pints**



Washing dishes  
**2 pints**



The average family produces 20 pints of moisture a day in their home.

## Reduce the potential for condensation by producing less moisture

- Try not to dry clothes inside. Hang washing outside to dry, or hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or extractor fan on. This will allow the moisture to escape outside rather than circulate around the home. Don't be tempted to put wet clothes on radiators or in front of a radiator heater to dry.
- Always cook with pan lids on, and turn the heat down once the water has boiled. Only use the minimum amount of water for cooking vegetables.
- When filling a bath, run the cold water first then add the hot- this will reduce the steam produced by 90%.
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed to stop moisture moving around the house.
- If using a tumble drier, make sure it is vented to the outside or that it is the new condensing type.
- Don't use a gas cooker to heat the kitchen as it produces moisture when burning gas.
- Avoid using bottled gas heaters; they produce about 8 pints of moisture from an average-sized gas cylinder. Open a window for ventilation if using one.



## Ventilating your home

Ventilation can help to reduce condensation by removing moist air from the home and replacing it with drier air from outside.



- Reduce condensation that has built up overnight by 'cross-ventilating' the home – open a small window downstairs and a small one upstairs. The windows should be on opposite sides of the house, or diagonally opposite if in a flat. At the same time, open the interior doors, this will allow drier air to circulate throughout the home. Cross-ventilation should be carried out for about 30 minutes each day.

*\*Note: make sure that accessible windows will not cause a security problem – remember to close them when leaving the home.*

- Ventilate the kitchen when cooking, washing up or washing by hand by opening a small window. If available, use a cooker extractor hood or extractor fan.



- Ventilate the kitchen and bathroom for about 20 minutes after use by opening a small top window. Use an extractor fan if possible – they are cheap to run and very effective.
- Ventilate your bedroom by leaving a window slightly open at night, or use trickle ventilators if fitted.
- Keep the kitchen and bathroom doors closed to prevent moisture escaping into the rest of the house.

- Do not block air vents.



- Reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items by allowing air to circulate around them. Remove 'false' wardrobe backs or drill breather holes in them. Never overfill wardrobes and cupboards, as it restricts air circulation.
- Place furniture on blocks to allow air to circulate underneath. Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls.

## Cold Surfaces

Condensation forms more easily on cold surfaces in the home, for example walls and ceilings. In many cases, those surfaces can be made warmer by improving the insulation and draught-proofing.

Insulation and draught-proofing will also help keep the whole house warmer and will cut fuel bills. When the whole house is warmer, condensation becomes less likely. Loft and wall insulation are the most effective forms of insulation.



If installing any draught-proofing, observe the following guidance:

- Do not draught-proof rooms with a condensation problem, or where there is a heater or cooker that burns gas or solid fuel, as these require air to operate safely (ensure you have working Carbon Monoxide alarms in rooms with these appliances). Modern central heating boilers do not require air from the room to operate so these

locations can be draft proofed (but still require the Carbon Monoxide alarm).

- Do not block permanent ventilators or air-bricks installed for heating or heating appliances.
- Do not draught-proof bathroom or kitchen windows.



## Temperature of the home

Warm air holds more moisture than cooler air that is more likely to deposit droplets of condensation round the home. Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. Therefore it is better to have a medium-to low level of heat throughout the house. Keeping the heating on low all day in cold weather will help to control condensation.

- If there is not heating in every room, keep the doors of unheated rooms open to allow some heat into them.
- Keep curtains open for 4-5 hours a day.
- 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.

*\*Remember, portable bottled gas heaters give out a lot of moisture whilst in use. Contrary to popular belief, it is actually cheaper to heat a room with on-peak electricity than by using bottled gas heaters.*

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

## Steps against mould growth

First, treat the mould already in your home, and then deal with the basic problem of condensation to stop mould reappearing.

- To kill and remove mould, wipe down or spray walls and window frames with fungicidal wash that carries a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) 'approval number', ensuring the instructions are followed for its safe use. Fungicidal washes are often available at local supermarkets.
- Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.
- Do not try to remove mould by using a brush or vacuum cleaner.



- After treatment, redecorate using good-quality fungicidal paint and a fungicidal resistant wall paper paste to help prevent mould recurring. The effect of fungicidal or anti-condensation paint is destroyed if covered with ordinary paint or wallpaper.



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



## Steps against condensation

It is important to take proper steps to deal with condensation, but meanwhile there are some simple things you should do straight away.

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



## Key points to reducing condensation

- Reduce the amount of moisture in the home
- Improve ventilation
- Reduce the number of cold surfaces in the home
- Maintain an adequate temperature



## We are here to help

If, after following the advice in this leaflet you still think you have a problem with damp, mould and condensation in your home, please contact us so we can look into it.

Pembrokeshire County Council Tenants –

(T) 01437 764551 (Building Maintenance)

Private Sector Tenants – (T) 01437 764551

(Private Sector Housing Team)

(E) Housing Enforcement Private – [housenfpr@pembrokeshire.gov.uk](mailto:housenfpr@pembrokeshire.gov.uk)



## Extractor Fans

The humidistat extractor fans Pembrokeshire County Council fit in their properties are activated by moisture. These are found in your kitchen and bathroom. They are energy efficient and cost little to run.

### Kitchen

You should always make sure you turn on the extractor fan while cooking.

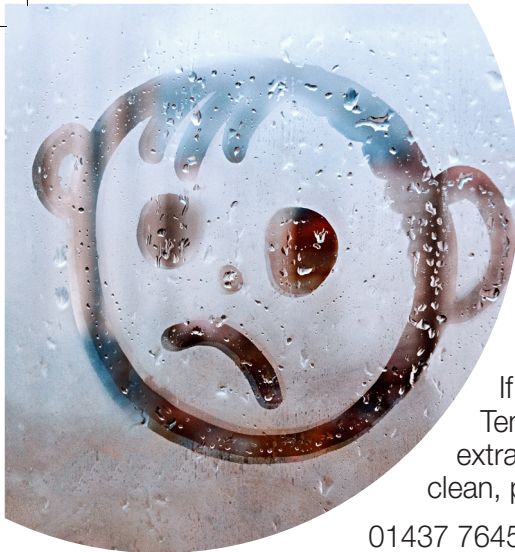
This will help get rid of impure air. Please keep the extractor fan running for about 5 minutes, even after you have finished cooking.



### Bathroom

You should always use the extractor fan when having a shower or bath.

It should be left running until the condensation has cleared from the bathroom. If the fan is switched off before the condensation has cleared, you are at a higher risk of mould developing from the condensation that is left in the room.



When the fan is on in your kitchen or bathroom, the door to the room should be closed to keep it contained until the condensation has cleared.

It is important to keep your extractor fans clean to ensure they run as efficiently as possible. The method of cleaning depends on the fan that you have.

If you are a Pembrokeshire County Council Tenant and would like to request a humidistat extractor fan, or for advice on how to keep it clean, please call our Building Maintenance team on:

01437 764551.

## **Loft Insulation**

All Pembrokeshire County Council properties should have fully insulated lofts if your property has less than 10 inches (25cm) of loft insulation please call our Building Maintenance team on:

01437 764551.

## **Heating Bills**

If you are a Pembrokeshire County Council tenant and would like advice on getting the best deal for your energy bills, please contact the Tenant Financial Support Team:-

(T) 01437 764551

(E) [HousingFST@pembrokeshire.gov.uk](mailto:HousingFST@pembrokeshire.gov.uk)



