



Habinteg
Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd

CONDENSATION



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Dampness and mould in dwellings is a commonplace problem, especially in older buildings. Most of the complaints we receive about dampness and patches of mould growth on walls turn out to be caused by condensation. Condensation can often be seen as water droplets on windows or water pooling on window sills. It occurs when moist air reaches a cold surface and deposits some of its water on the surface.

If you find patches of mould on walls, furnishings or clothes and have patches of damp, condensation may be the cause.

How do you know if it is condensation?

There are some key points to look out for:

- Condensation is usually found on north facing walls and in corners, cupboards and under work surfaces - in fact wherever there is little air movement.
- Other kinds of dampness, such as rain or plumbing leaks, usually leave a 'tidemark'.
- If you are not sure what is causing the damp in your home, start by checking pipes and overflows and under sinks to see if there are any obvious leaks. Have a look outside, too - you may notice slates missing from the roof or cracked gutters or pipes.
- If you live in a new or recently modernised house or flat, the property may not have 'dried out' thoroughly from the building process and it usually takes 9 - 18 months for this to happen. You may need to use more heat during that time.

Why is condensation occurring?

Air can only hold a certain amount of water vapour – the warmer it is the more it can hold. If it is cooled by contact with a cold surface such as a mirror, a window or even a wall, the water vapour will turn into droplets of water-condensation. So the warmer you keep your home the less likely you are to get condensation.

Keep your home warm and open windows a little if they become misted up. Leaving background heat on during the day may cost little more than heating your home quickly in the evening. Ask your Housing Officer or Community Assistant for advice about the heating system you have in your property.

When is it a problem?

Every home gets condensation at some time – usually when lots of moisture and steam are being produced, for instance at bath times, when a meal is being cooked or when clothes are being washed. It is quite normal to find your bedroom windows misted up in the morning after a cold night. It should not, however, be a continual problem.

Is condensation bad for my health?

If your home is damp or has lots of condensation, the chances are the house will be a cold house. Living in a cold house will lead to negative health effects.

Mould and fungi can be allergenic. However, house dust mites are the most common triggers of asthma rather than mould growth. House dust mites thrive where the amount of ventilation is reduced and there is high humidity. These conditions can also lead to condensation.

What can I do about Condensation?

You can get rid of the mould by washing down with a bleach type solution and you can buy special paints which may help prevent growth of mould but **the only permanent cure is to reduce the amount of condensation in your home**. Remember, the way you use your home affects the amount of condensation you get. This does not mean that you should alter your habits dramatically - just bear in mind the following tips:

Doors

Keep kitchen and bathroom doors shut, particularly when cooking, washing or bathing - otherwise water vapour will spread right through the house.

Ventilation and windows

The more moisture produced in your home, the greater are the chances of condensation, unless there is adequate ventilation. Nobody likes draughts, but some ventilation is essential.

In winter open the window a little, only as long as they are misted up. if you fit draught stripping, leave a space for a small amount of air to get through.

If you have an extractor fan use it when cooking or having a bath/shower.

Kettles and Pans

Don't overfill kettles and pans or allow them to boil away any longer than is necessary.

Heating and Insulation

As mentioned, you will get less condensation if you keep your home warm most of the time. Try, where possible, to maintain a constant, low level of heating. Fuel is expensive so it is important that your heating system is checked regularly to ensure that it works efficiently. If you use bottle gas or parafin heaters you will need to allow additional ventilation.

Insulation will help you keep your home warmer but remember you will need to keep some form ventilation if you install draught proofing or double glazing.

Drying Clothes

Drying clothes indoors, particularly on radiators, can increase condensation unless you open a window to allow air to circulate. If you have a tumble dryer which is not vented to the outside you will need to allow more ventilation when you use it.

Cupboards and Wardrobes

Don't overfill cupboards and wardrobes. Always make sure that some air can circulate freely by fitting ventilators in doors and leaving a space at the back of the shelves.

Chimneys (where applicable)

Never block these up completely. If you are blocking up a fire place, fit an air vent to allow ventilation.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

Habinteg's offices are open
Monday to Thursday, 8.45am - 4.45pm
and Friday 8:45am - 4:30pm

You can contact us during these hours
using the details below.



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