

Damp & Mould

information for occupants



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The Problem

By far the biggest form of dampness affecting property in the UK is condensation. Dampness problems associated with condensation and mould growth occur in many buildings yet they are not always understood.

Condensation is caused when warm, moist air cools and the moisture in the air forms as water droplets. This can be seen when water appears on the inside

of windows or on tiles in the bathroom when a shower is used. Water also condenses on walls and ceilings and in cupboards but is not always immediately obvious. Sometimes you only realise there is a problem when mould appears or wallpaper starts peeling.

Other problems related to condensation and mould in domestic properties can include, crumbling wall plaster and the discoloration of carpets, curtains and furniture (usually caused by the growth of mould), which as well as being unsightly and smelling unpleasant can be damaging to health. The main potential risk to health from mould spores are considered to be allergic responses, such as coughing, sneezing and eye irritation. This can be a particular problem for asthma sufferers.

Mould growth can appear in a variety of shades including green, yellow, black, white and even pink and will form on almost any surface, where there is a source of water (condensation) and organic matter. Paint, plaster, timber, clothing and leather are common hosts to mould.

So What Can Be Done?

Most moisture in the air is caused by normal everyday activities. It can come from cooking, washing clothes, drying clothes (particularly on radiators) or using the bath or shower. Even just breathing adds significantly to the amount of moisture present in the air of the average household.

Obviously by reducing the amount of moisture you produce or stopping the air cooling, the amount of condensation forming can also be reduced. If mould grows it should be cleaned with a purpose made mould cleaner and not with bleach. In really severe cases extractor fans or other ventilation systems may be necessary but in most cases condensation can be dramatically reduced or eliminated completely by lowering the amount of moisture in the air by following some simple rules.

1. Limit moisture production in the bathroom and kitchen (i.e. don't leave the shower running) and stop the moist air moving elsewhere in the property by keeping the doors shut.
2. Use background ventilation where possible (i.e. open the bathroom window slightly).
3. Always use extractor fans if they are fitted in the kitchen and bathrooms.
4. Maintain low heating throughout even if the property is unoccupied during the day.
5. Ensure tumble dryers and washing machines are vented directly outside.
6. Don't use paraffin or Calor gas heaters.
7. Don't dry clothes on radiators.

To the untrained eye condensation can sometimes be confused with rising damp or rainwater penetration. In some cases these problems can make condensation *appear* worse but they do not *cause* condensation.

Any damp problem should be inspected by a CSRT qualified Remedial Treatment Surveyor. Make sure anyone giving you advice is qualified to do so. If they are not qualified, why not?

