

# Condensation and Damp

Condensation and damp are problems for lots of people. This advice sheet tells you what they are and how you can stop them happening.

## What condensation is

Condensation is when droplets of water appear on surfaces around your home, such as on the windows or cold walls.

It happens because warm air in your home contains lots of moisture. When this moisture hits a cold surface, such as a wall or window, it cools leaving drops of water.

Condensation is also found where there is less movement of air. For example, behind furniture, in the corners of rooms, in wardrobes or in drawers.

## Why condensation is a problem

When condensation isn't cleaned up, it can turn into patchy, black mould. This may smell musty.

Over time, condensation can cause damage to your home. For example, rotting wooden window frames, peeling wallpaper and mould stains on clothes and carpets. It can also affect your health, increasing the risk of asthma and other chest problems.



## What causes condensation

**Producing lots of moisture:** cooking, drying clothes, showering and having baths add moisture to the air inside your home.

**Not letting the moist air out:** traps the moisture in your home.

**Not turning the heating on:** colder air holds less moisture, so if there's no heating, droplets of water will appear around your home.

**Not having enough insulation:** makes the air colder and there are more cold surfaces to attract moisture.

## How you can avoid condensation

You can avoid condensation by creating less moisture, letting moist air out and keeping your home warm. You can do this by following these easy steps.

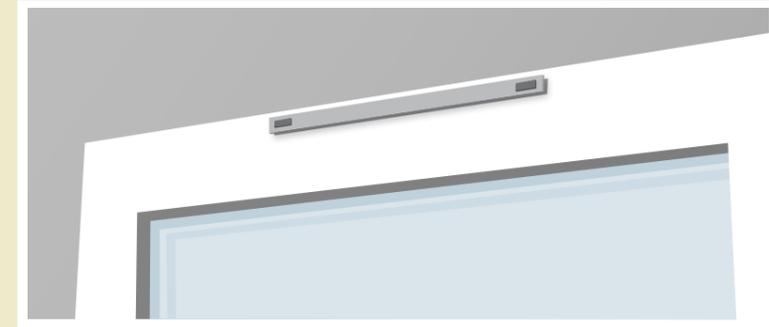
### Creating less moisture

- Keeping pan lids on during cooking.
- Taking shorter showers – these will reduce your gas and/or electricity bills too!
- Avoiding use of paraffin or bottle gas heaters.
- Drying clothes:
  - Dry clothes outdoors if possible. If you need to dry them inside your home, hang them on a clothes airer. Make sure you open the window or switch on the extractor fan and close the door to that room.
  - Avoid putting wet clothes on your radiators
  - If you use a vented tumble dryer make sure the hose goes outside through an open window or door. If this isn't possible use a self-condensing kit. You can buy these in most DIY shops.



### Letting moist air out

- Making sure air bricks or vents are not covered by furniture.
- Keeping trickle vents on window frames open (see picture below). These small vents allow moisture to escape slowly without making the room too cold.



- Leaving spaces between furniture and walls where possible and reducing clutter to let the air move more freely around rooms.
- Putting on your extractor fan when you are cooking, drying clothes or bathing. If possible leave it on until the moisture has gone from that room or your clothes are dry.
  - If you have an extractor fan that is on all of the time switch the boost on.
- Opening your kitchen and bathroom windows wide for up to 10 minutes a day when possible to let moist air out. Don't forget to keep your doors shut and close windows when the heating is on or when you go out.
- If your home was built recently you may have a built-in ventilation system. This means you need to do things a little differently. Read the advice sheet about ventilation for more information.

### Keeping your home warm

- Keeping the temperature throughout your home between 18°C and 21°C.
- Contacting Home Energy Scotland on Freephone 0808 808 2282 to find out if you need more insulation or draught-proofing, if you are worried that your home isn't warm enough.

## Other causes of damp

Condensation is not the only cause of damp in homes.

If you can see:	It might be caused by:
A clear damp patch which is wet to touch, thick mould may also start to grow	Water leaking from waste pipes or overflow
A clear damp patch which is likely to be wet to touch and worse when it rains, thick mould may also start to grow	Water coming in through leaking pipes, gutters or a crack in the wall or a missing roof tile
A 'tidemark' on the wall about a metre above the floor (see picture below)	Rising damp caused by a failure in the damp course treatment in your home

If you think the damp in your home is caused by any of the above problems, contact your landlord.

If you have damp and you cannot find any of the causes listed above, the problem is likely to be condensation. Follow the steps for avoiding condensation in this advice sheet.



## Useful Contacts

Home Energy Scotland - Freephone **0808 808 2282**

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