

Condensation, damp and mould

What is condensation?

Every home gets condensation at some time - it forms when warm moist air and steam produced during cooking, washing clothes and bathing, comes into contact with, and condenses on, a cold surface before it can leave the building. It is quite normal to find your windows misted up in the morning after a cold night and there is nothing much you can do to stop this. However, sometimes condensation can be a more serious problem. Cold surfaces such as outside walls, glass and even furniture and clothing can become damp and black mould might grow.

What can you do about it?

There is no immediate and easy solution but as a tenant you need to balance three main factors which are heating, ventilation and moisture.

1 Heating

Cold areas in the home should be avoided, as these are where condensation can occur, so ideally whole home heating is best. You will get less condensation if you keep the property warm most of the time.

Insulation will help do this and there are grant and discount schemes which will apply to you. You may even be able to get free insulation and a new heating system if you are on certain government benefits. Your landlord may also be interested to learn more about what is available, so telephone the Kent Energy Centre on the free phone number 0800 358 6669. Actions you can take to help you are -

- Make best use of your central heating controls. Another fact sheet in this series tells you more about this
- If you can't afford to spend more on fuel because of high bills, ask your fuel supplier about their budget schemes



2 Ventilation

Nobody likes draughts, but some ventilation is essential if condensation is to be controlled. These are some things you can do;

- In winter, open windows for short periods of time each day. Outdoor winter air is much drier than indoor air and opening the window allows the warm moist air to escape and dry air to enter.
- If draught proofing is fitted make sure there is a small space for some air to get through.
- Open windows during cooking, after a bath or shower, or if the glass is misted up. This will let out moisture, but remember to close them again shortly afterwards so the rooms do not get too cold.
- Avoid pockets of undisturbed stagnant air, for example, behind wardrobes and cupboards.

3 Moisture reduction

The more moisture produced in the property, the greater the chances of condensation. In some homes, up to 17 litres of water can be produced daily! Things you can do to help are;

- Dry clothes outside if possible as drying clothes indoors creates a lot of moisture. However, if you have to dry clothes indoors use the bathroom with an open window and the internal door shut.
- Make sure tumble dryers are properly vented to the outside of the house.
- Portable gas or paraffin heaters produce a lot of moisture. One pint of paraffin produces one pint of water. If you use these heaters you will need a lot more ventilation.
- Close bathroom and kitchen doors whilst cooking and bathing and open a window in that room. The warm moist air can then escape through the window and is prevented from travelling to another, perhaps colder, part of the building.
- Keep lids on saucepans to reduce the steam given off. You can carry out some of these measures at very little cost, however, as a tenant you may need agreement from your landlord.

If the above points are followed, condensation should not be a persistent problem in the home. However, you must remember that a balance is needed between the three factors and you may need to experiment and persevere until the problem is resolved.



Condensation can cause mould to form



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Tel. 0800 358 6669

The Kent Energy Centre works in partnership
with Kent's 13 local authorities