



Mould and Condensation Information for Tenants



Housing Services

Tackling Mould and Condensation

Damp in homes typically arises from one of three sources: rising damp, penetrating damp or condensation. Dampness often leads to mould, which can be unpleasant and harmful to health.

Rising Damp

Rising damp occurs when moisture travels up from the ground through walls, often leaving a "tide mark." It's usually caused by a missing or damaged damp-proof course (DPC)—a horizontal barrier in the wall meant to block rising moisture.

If you notice a horizontal tide mark working its way up your walls from the floor, causing flaking and damage to the decoration, this will likely be rising damp, and you should report it immediately.



Penetrating Damp

Penetrating damp occurs when water enters the home through the roof, walls, floors, windows, or doors. It worsens during wind-driven rain. It typically results from building defects such as broken roof tiles, faulty flashing, cracks in brickwork or render, damaged gutters, decayed timber, or gaps around openings.

If you notice areas of damp on walls that form after wet and windy weather, causing flaking and damage to the decoration, this will likely be penetrating damp, and you should report it immediately.



Rising damp and penetrating damp are structural issues so the resolution is a landlord's responsibility. If you suspect your home is suffering from rising or penetrating damp, please report your concerns to us immediately at bht.org.uk/damp or by emailing repairs@bht.org.uk.

Condensation

Condensation is the most common cause of damp. Condensation occurs when warm, moisture-rich air meets cold surfaces, such as windows, walls, ceilings, mirrors, or pipes. As the air cools, water droplets form on these surfaces. This process is common in poorly ventilated kitchens, bathrooms, and bedrooms.

Condensation rarely causes damage, as the moisture sits on the face of internal walls, doors, and around windows. It often creates a pyramid pattern in the corners of a room, both at the top and the bottom of internal walls. It can be identified easily because mould forms quickly.



Why does mould form?

Daily household activities, such as cooking, showering, drying clothes indoors, and even breathing, release large amounts of moisture into the air. Condensation can quickly build up without adequate ventilation.

The resulting damp patches create ideal conditions for mould to grow, which can damage surfaces and pose health risks over time. Proper airflow and moisture control are essential to prevent condensation-related problems.

Mould growth

If too much condensation forms in the air for prolonged periods, mould will form on walls and the contents of your home, particularly if you do not heat and ventilate your home.



Mould treatment

If mould is present in your home, you should wash the walls with a specialist mould-treating product according to the manufacturer's instructions. You can usually find these in your local supermarkets or homeware stores.

To kill the invisible mould spores, treat an area at least 1 metre wider than the visible patch of mould, repeating the treatment each time it reappears. This process can be frustrating and time-consuming, but preventing the mould from worsening will be worthwhile.

Moisture in your home

The below illustrates how much moisture could be in released into the air in your home at any one time, if you do certain household activities.



Washing clothes

0.5 litres

Bath or shower

1 litre

Ironing

1 litre

Cooking

3 litres

Drying clothes

5 litres



Preventing mould

Most damp reports we receive are caused by condensation, which can be rectified by making changes in your home. The following advice will help you understand what changes you need to make.

Heating

- Keep your home warm. Ensure your heating is working well, and report any concerns to repairs@bht.org.uk.
- During colder months, turn your heating on regularly. If you cannot afford to do so, follow the suggestions below.



Ventilation

- Open windows to keep your home well-ventilated. The security latch allows them to be left partially open while remaining secure. If trickle vents are fitted, keep these open.
- Keep the kitchen door closed and window open during and after cooking or washing up.
- When bathing, keep the door shut and window open and/or the extractor fan on during and afterwards.
- Keep extractor fans clean and check they are working correctly. If you wish to test your fan, place 1 square of toilet paper over the fan while it is switched on. If the toilet paper drops away, then report this issue to repairs@bht.org.uk.
- Check that the vents and airbricks aren't blocked or covered. If a vent has a cover, move it to the open position.
- Ensure furniture is at least 6 inches from the outside walls to allow air to circulate.

Reducing moisture

- When cooking, place lids on saucepans to avoid steam.
- When running a bath, fill it with cold water before adding hot water.
- If there is a sudden build-up of steam, run the cold tap, as this will draw steam down the plug hole.
- When bathing or showering, use a squeegee to move the water from the tiles and the shower screen into the plug hole.
- Close curtains at night to keep heat in. If condensation forms on windowpanes, dry them using a squeegee and/or a cloth daily.
- If you can't dry laundry outside, use the spin cycle on the washing machine twice to reduce water in the fabric. You can also use a tumble dryer or hang the washing in a room with the internal door closed and a window open, ideally the bathroom.
- Ensure clothes are completely dry before putting them in wardrobes and drawers.
- Do not use portable gas heaters indoors as they moisten the air.
- In severe cases, use a dehumidifier (details follow).



Managing condensation

In simplest terms, condensation is avoided when the ratio of heat and moisture in your home is managed correctly, and the advice we have given you will assist you in doing this.

Hygrometers

To monitor your success, fit a hygrometer in a room where you have experienced condensation. The hygrometer should be fitted centrally in the room at eye level, out of direct sunlight and not on an external wall.

The hygrometer measures how moist the air in your home is, known as the humidity level. 100% humidity is extremely wet; 0% is completely dry. Mould grows at around 60% humidity and above, so try to keep the humidity level below this to prevent mould from forming.

Adjust your heat and ventilation, while continuing to manage the moisture created in your home, until the hygrometer confirms the heat and humidity levels are in the recommended range. In this example, the recommended ranges are the green zones.



Dehumidifiers

Dehumidifiers reduce moisture in the air and can help resolve condensation issues in your home. You do not need one to reduce moisture but if the advice in this leaflet is difficult to follow, it may be an additional help.

- Set your dehumidifier to under 60% humidity.
- On warm, dry days, opening a window is as effective as running a dehumidifier.
- The dehumidifier will work more efficiently if you close the doors and windows in the room it's in.
- Buy a dehumidifier that will remove at least 5 litres of water every 24 hours. Avoid smaller, cheaper models. Decent dehumidifiers start at around £100.
- A good dehumidifier can cost as little as 14p per hour, but it is always best to monitor expenditure using a smart meter.
- If you are struggling and feel overwhelmed by condensation, please report your concerns to us immediately at www.bht.org.uk/damp or by emailing repairs@bht.org.uk, and if possible, provide photographs.

