Guidance for tackling condensation and mould in your home

What is condensation?

The air around us contains water vapour produced by the environment and our daily activities, such as cooking and washing. Air that is warm can hold more water vapour than air that is cold. When warm air cools and/or comes into contact with a cold surface it deposits the excess water vapour that it can no longer hold on to the nearest cool surface. The water residue left on the cold surface is called condensation.

In Britain condensation usually happens during cold weather when warm, moist air is generated in one room and then spreads to cooler parts of the building. Condensation is most visible when it forms on non-absorbent surfaces like windows or tiles. However, it can form on any type of surface and may not be noticeable until it causes visible damage, for example black mould. Condensation can lead to misted or streaming windows and, in some circumstances, mould growth and walls that are wet to the touch. It is also one of the most common causes of damp in buildings. It is extremely important that measures are taken to prevent condensation happening and that any existing damage caused by condensation is treated before the problem worsens.

What are the causes of condensation and how do I prevent it?

Too much moisture being produced in your home

As condensation is caused by excess water vapour in the air, minimising activities that produce water vapour will help to reduce condensation.

- Cover saucepans when you are cooking and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Avoid using paraffin and portable bottled gas heaters as they produce

excess moisture.

• Dry washing outdoors on a line or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or the extractor fan on.

• Avoid drying damp clothes on radiators as all the moisture they contain will go into the room.

• When filling the bath add the cold water first, then the hot water. This will reduce steam that leads to condensation by 90 per cent.

• Wipe over visible condensation on non-absorbent surfaces with a dry cloth to remove the excess moisture.

Not enough ventilation

Ventilating your accommodation will help to remove moist air that is being produced.

• Cross ventilate your home – cross ventilating your home daily will allow drier air from outside to circulate. To cross ventilate your home open the windows (they only have to be slightly ajar) at opposite sides of the house or diagonally opposite, if you live in a flat, and open the interior doors.

• Occupied rooms – rooms that are frequently occupied may need some form of ventilation all the time to allow the moisture produced by breath and water to escape. Keep a small window ajar or a trickle vent open to allow warm moist air to flow out.

• Kitchens and bathrooms – a lot of excess moisture tends to be generated in these rooms, which means that they will need more ventilation. When you cook, wash up, bathe or dry clothes, open the windows and use an extractor fan if one is fitted. Keep kitchen and bathroom doors shut when these rooms are in use to prevent moisture spreading throughout the building.

• Bedrooms – if wardrobes are not properly ventilated it can lead to mildew forming on clothes. Try not to overfill your wardrobes as this will reduce air circulation. Leave space between the back of large furniture and the walls to allow air to circulate and where possible do not put large furniture up against exterior walls.

For safety and security reasons please ensure that you only open your windows while you are in your property and remember to close them when you go out.

Cold surfaces

Condensation typically forms on cold surface. By reducing cold surfaces in your home you can reduce condensation. Loft and cavity wall insulation, alongside draught proofing windows and external doors, will help to reduce the cold surfaces within your home. If you rent your property from a private or social landlord please contact them before fitting any loft or cavity wall insulation.

Please note when fitting draught proofing:

- **Do not** block permanent ventilators.
- **Do not** draught proof any rooms that have existing condensation problems as these rooms will benefit from the ventilation.
- **Do not** draught proof rooms where there is a fuel-burning heater (gas fire) or cooker.
- **Do not** draft proof windows in the bathroom and kitchen as this will prevent the steam produced in these rooms from escaping.

Temperature of your home

When heating your home try not to have one room at a high temperature while leaving the rest of the property cold. Air in a warmer room will always try to move to a cooler room and this will create condensation. Keeping your entire home at a constant warm temperature when there will help to reduce condensation.

Ideally your home should be between 18ºC and 24ºC.

Please note: Before using any form of chemical produce, ensure you read and fully understand the product's instructions. Be sure to read and understand the ingrediencies in the product to avoid any adverse reactions.