



# Dealing with damp and mould

Advice and information



**watford**  
community  
housing

**If you spot damp or mould in your home, we're here to help.**

This leaflet includes guidance on spotting problems with damp and mould. It also explains how we can help and includes advice on steps you can take to prevent any issues from developing in your home.

# What should I do if I have damp or mould in my home?

We are committed to tackling mould, damp, condensation and disrepair issues quickly and effectively. Damp and mould may lead to serious issues, so you should contact us straight away if you spot signs of these in your home.

## Tell us about the problem

Please provide as much information as possible to help us to identify the cause of the problem. It is really important that you tell us:

- Which rooms in your home are affected.
- How long this has been an issue.
- If anyone in your family has any health problems that we should know about.
- If there are any repairs issues that you think might be causing the problem, such as blocked gutters or a leak.

If possible, please also send us photographs showing the size of the affected area. These can help us to identify the type of damp or mould in your home.



## Get in touch

Email: [enquiries@wcht.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wcht.org.uk)

Phone: 0800 218 2247

Online: you can report damp and mould problems through your account at [www.wcht.org.uk](http://www.wcht.org.uk)

# What we'll do to put things right

## Tackling damp and mould

When you report a damp or mould problem to us, we will:

- Arrange an appointment with you so we can inspect the problem.
- Visit your home and identify the cause of the problem.
- Talk to you about how we can work together to put it right.
- Book in any repairs that are needed.
- Carry out any improvements that may help, such as fitting an extractor fan.
- Offer you a mould kit to wash any affected areas.
- Offer you condensation traps, which collect moisture from the air.
- Offer advice on how to prevent the problem from happening again.
- Schedule another visit to inspect your home after we have completed any work.

We may also fit your home with some equipment which measures the problem.

## What happens if the problem comes back?

If you have concerns after we have worked with you, please get back in touch with us. You can provide further photographs and we will come back out and re-inspect your home.



# What causes damp?

Damp problems can occur as a result of moisture inside or outside your home.

## External dampness

External dampness – often caused by rain – generally results in damp patches on the wall or ceiling, and is caused by defects in the roof, gutter, cladding or windows. If you are aware of defects such as these, please report them to us as soon as possible so that we can arrange to repair them.

## Internal dampness

Internal dampness is caused by condensation and is sometimes harder to remove and prevent. It generally results

in damp patches on the upper junction between the wall and the ceiling, or on lower corners of walls. When dealing with condensation it is important to tackle the cause of the problem as well as the symptoms, which can mean rearranging your home or making some small lifestyle changes. It is important that you contact us if you are experiencing damp as we can investigate the cause and make any repairs or adjustments as necessary.



# What is condensation?

## How does it form?

The air can only hold a certain amount of water vapour – the warmer it is, the more it can hold. When air comes into contact with a cold surface such as a mirror, a window or even a wall, the water vapour cools and will turn into droplets of water – resulting in condensation. This is what happens when mirrors mist up in the bathroom. It is quite normal to find your bedroom windows misted up in the morning after a cold night, and this is not indicative of a serious condensation problem.

Every home experiences condensation at some time – usually when lots of moisture

and steam are being produced. Cooking, washing, bathing and even breathing are just a few examples of activities that cause condensation.

## Excessive condensation

However, excessive condensation can lead to problems. It's often the cause of black mould on walls, furniture, clothes and curtains. The damp left by condensation will also damage plasterwork and timber window frames. Mould can even be harmful to your health, as well as not looking very nice, so it's important to try to tackle condensation.














# Where does moisture come from?

Moisture in your home can come from a number of different sources. Did you know, for example, that when you sleep you add half a pint of water to the air overnight – and twice that amount when you are active during the day?

The table below shows how much extra moisture we produce through everyday activities over the course of a single day.

These are just a few examples of the causes of condensation and, while they may not be the root cause of damp or mould in your home, they are worth bearing in mind.



	2 people at home		3 pints
	A bath or shower		2 pints
	Drying clothes indoors		9 pints
	Cooking and using a kettle		6 pints
	Washing dishes		2 pints
	Bottled gas heater (used for 8 hours)		4 pints
	Total moisture added in 1 day		26 pints or 14.8 litres

# How can I reduce condensation?

As seen on the previous page, the amount of condensation in your home can easily mount up, but there are a number of small things you can do to help reduce the amount that is produced.

- Dry your windows and window sills every morning, as well as any wet surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom.
- Wring out clothes rather than drying them on a radiator.
- Hang your washing outside to dry if at all possible. Alternatively, hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or an extractor fan on. Don't put washing on radiators or in front of heaters.
- Always cook with pan lids on, and turn the heat down once the water has boiled. Only use the minimum amount of water for cooking vegetables.
- When filling your bath, run the cold water first and then add the hot – it reduces steam (which leads to condensation) by 90%.
- If you use a tumble dryer, make sure it is vented to the outside or that it is a new 'condensing' model.
- Don't be tempted to use bottled gas or paraffin heaters. These are not allowed under your tenancy agreement and they produce high levels of moisture.
- Increasing the ventilation in your home reduces condensation, so try to allow air to circulate and dry out by frequently opening windows. There is more information about ventilation later in this leaflet.
- Controlling the temperature is also important in keeping your home free of moisture. There is more information about controlling temperature later in this leaflet.



# Controlling the temperature in your home

Warm air holds more moisture than cool air and is therefore less likely to deposit droplets of water around your home. Keeping your home at a controlled, warm temperature will help reduce condensation.

- Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. It's better to have a medium-to-low level of heat throughout the house.
- It's cheaper to keep your central heating on at a low level than to use electric fires. It is also better to try to maintain a low heat than to suddenly try to heat the house twice a day from cold. If you don't have heating in every room, open doors in unheated rooms slightly to allow some heat into them.
- To add heat to rooms without heating installed, use electric heaters (like oil-filled radiators or panel heaters) on a low setting.
- If you have a freezer and keep it in a space that suffers from condensation, heat from its motor will help reduce condensation.
- Don't push beds or sofas against radiators as this prevents efficient circulation of warm air.

## Are you worried about the cost of heating your home?

It's important to keep your home warm to avoid damp and mould problems. If you are worried about the cost of your energy bills, we can help – so please talk to us.

We can provide free, confidential support to help you manage your bills. We can also help you to get free items – such as draught excluders, electric blankets and energy vouchers towards your bills – and advice from a range of other organisations, including Better Housing Better Health (visit [bhbh.org.uk](http://bhbh.org.uk) for more information).

For support, call us on **0800 218 2247**.





# Increase your ventilation

**Ensuring that your home is well ventilated is one of the most effective things you can do to keep your home free from damp. It reduces condensation by removing moist air from your home and replacing it with drier air from outside.**

- Reduce any condensation that builds up overnight by ‘cross-ventilating’ your home – opening a small window downstairs and a small one upstairs. These should be on opposite sides of the house (or diagonally opposite if you live in an apartment). At the same time, open the interior room doors to allow drier air to circulate. Do this for about 30 minutes each day to reduce overnight condensation in your home.
- Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom when cooking, bathing or washing up by opening windows – even if you only open your windows slightly, it can make a big difference. You can also use your cooker extractor hood or extractor fan to easily increase ventilation. Try to ventilate kitchens and bathrooms for at least 20 minutes after use.
- Keep your kitchen and bathroom doors closed whilst in use to prevent moisture escaping.
- Ventilate your bedroom by leaving a window slightly open at night, or using trickle vents if you have them.
- To reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items, allow air to circulate around them by removing ‘false’ wardrobe backs or drilling holes in them. You can place furniture on blocks to allow air to circulate underneath.
- Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and, where possible, place wardrobes and furniture against internal walls. You could also pull shelves away from the backs of wardrobes and cupboards. Avoid overfilling wardrobes and cupboards as it restricts air circulation.
- Don’t push beds and sofas against outside walls, which are always colder and attract condensation. Instead, make sure there is at least a 9-inch (225cm) gap between the bed and the wall. Bedding can get damp if air cannot circulate around it.

As important as it is to ventilate your home, you shouldn’t over-ventilate either. Too much ventilation in cold weather reduces the temperature inside, making condensation more likely (and increasing your heating costs!). Also, make sure you always close your windows before you go out.

# What to do with mould

There are some simple things you can do to remove any mould that has grown in your home:

- To kill and remove mould, spray and wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash that carries a Health & Safety Executive (HSE) 'approval number' – you can often buy these in supermarkets. Make sure to follow the instructions carefully for safe use.
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint and a fungicidal resistant wallpaper paste to help prevent mould growth recurring. Please note: fungicidal or anti-condensation paint becomes useless if covered with ordinary paint or wallpaper!
- Dry-clean clothes that have mildew on them and shampoo any carpets. Don't try to remove mould by using a brush or vacuum cleaner as it won't be very effective.
- Once the mould is removed, reduce the levels of condensation using the tips in this leaflet to stop the problem reoccurring.
- If in doubt, please contact us so we can help. You can get in touch with us by emailing [enquiries@wcht.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wcht.org.uk) or calling us on **0800 218 2247**.





## **Need help reading this?**

Get in touch if you need this booklet translated into a different language. Call **0800 218 2247** or email **[enquiries@wcht.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wcht.org.uk)**



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