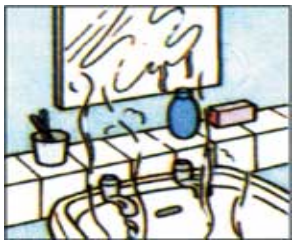
Indoor Condensation and Mould

What is condensation?

Condensation is the dampness formed when air laden with water vapour is cooled by contact with a cold surface. There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water appear - this is condensation. You notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath. Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather, whether it is raining or dry, it does not leave a “tide” mark. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. It can be seen in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. It often forms on north – facing walls. If this occurs over a period of time, it will result in mould growth.



Effects of condensation

Indoor condensation can cause damage to household fabrics, discolour paint and wallpaper. Also - more importantly, it promotes conditions suitable for the growth of mould that is potentially harmful to your health.

What is mould?

Moulds are types of fungi that can grow on a range of materials that are damp and usually in dark places. Walls, wood, carpet, furniture and fabrics can harbour mould if they stay damp for long periods of time. Moulds thrive in high humidity conditions and emit particles that may cause an allergic reaction while they are growing. Often they release an odour which many people find disagreeable. If the humidity drops suddenly, some moulds release millions of tiny particles into the air which make people sneeze. This is not necessarily an allergy; like a dust storm, it is a reaction to the particles in the air. However, mould growing in a building can precipitate asthma attacks and other respiratory illnesses in susceptible children and adults.

How do we control condensation and mould?

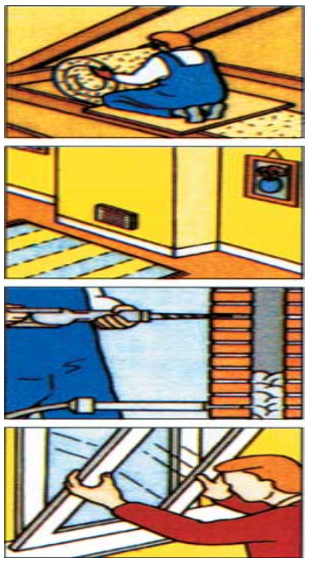
* Ventilation
* Insulation
* Heating
* Removal of mould
* Good practices

Ventilation

The simplest and cheapest way of ventilating a room is to leave a window or door open, if possible. It is better to ventilate continuously and evenly by having at least one window slightly open for most of the time rather than having it wide open for a short time. The most effective way of removing moisture in the air is to install exhaust fans in the area where water vapour is created. All exhaust fans should be balanced by the provision of an adequate supply of outside air

Heating

Heating with dry heat can also help reduce condensation and mould. It is usually better to have a continuous low level of heating rather than short bursts of high heat. Continuous, even heating eventually will allow warmth to penetrate the walls and ceilings. On cool days, try to keep the inside temperature of the house at least 5’C higher than the temperature outside.



Insulation

Good insulation will keep warmth in the dwelling and will help reduce condensation and mould problems. If walls and ceilings are well insulated they will remain warmer for longer, reducing the likelihood of water vapour condensation and conditions that are ideal for mould growth

Removing Mould

Mould can be removed from any surface with a diluted solution of bleach (the recommended safety precautions must be followed). However, test the effect of bleach on a small part of the surface before applying it to the whole area. After applying the mixture leave the treated surface for about 20 minutes and then lightly sponge with clean water.

Educate occupiers

Encourage occupiers to follow these practical steps to reduce condensation

- Keep lids on saucepans when cooking
- Vent tumble driers to the outside
- Avoid bottled gas and paraffin heaters as water vapour is produced
- When cooking or bathing, open windows to help moisture escape, and close the doors of these rooms to prevent it from spreading to other areas of the dwelling

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For any further assistance please contact the HMO Team at:

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