

CONDENSATION, DAMP AND MOULD

How to reduce the risk in
your home



FREE ADVICE FROM PEC'S ENERGY TEAM

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“If you have damp and mould in your home, you're more likely to have respiratory problems, respiratory infections, allergies or asthma. Damp and mould can also affect the immune system and impact negatively on your mental health.”

BLACK MOULD: THE MAIN CAUSES

Condensation is the most common cause of damp, which can lead to mould in your home. It often appears as a cloud of little black dots on damp surfaces in the home such as walls and ceilings.

Condensation occurs when moist air comes into contact with a colder surface like a wall, window, mirror etc. The air can't hold the moisture and tiny drops of water appear. These droplets of water, if not wiped away from surfaces in the home, can lead to mould spores growing, causing black stains.

It also occurs in places where the air is still, like the corners of rooms, behind furniture or inside wardrobes.

Although this is sometimes caused by problems with a building, such as a lack of or poor level of insulation, our behaviour can also have a large part to play. These include habits such as drying clothes indoors, inadequate use of the central heating system, poor ventilation, not opening windows regularly, or a combination of all of these.

There are also types of damp that are caused by structural issues in a home, and these need specific treatment in order to be resolved.



Black Mould

STRUCTURAL DAMP



Penetrating damp

'**Penetrating damp**' is caused by moisture entering the house through leaking pipes, a damaged roof, blocked gutters, gaps around window frames and cracked or defective rendering and brickwork. All these problems can be remedied. You may see white marks or crumbling plaster inside – this is called "Efflorescence" and is evidence that water is getting inside.

'**Rising damp**' is due to a defective (or non-existent) damp-proof course (DPC). This will leave a 'tide mark' about 1m above the floor. Rising damp will only occur on ground floor homes. Fixing rising damp is a job for a qualified builder or specialist company. It usually involves injecting the wall with chemicals that prevent water from moving up a wall.



Rising damp



Newly built homes can sometimes feel damp because the water used during construction (in cement, plaster etc.) is still drying out.

FOUR WAYS TO REDUCE CONDENSATION AT HOME:

Heat your home a little more:

Rooms that are not heated are more likely to get damp. While you don't want to waste money heating rooms you don't use, very cold rooms are more likely to get damp and mould.

Set the thermostatic radiator valve (TRV) to 1 in unused rooms so the radiator gives out a little bit of heat whenever you have the heating on. If you don't have central heating, consider using a room heater with a timer and temperature control. Remember, unused rooms will need a good airing on a regular basis.



Set the radiator TRV to 1 in unused rooms

Let damp air out and fresh air in:



Allow fresh air to circulate to help prevent mould.

Open windows daily, even for just 10 minutes, to ventilate rooms and replace damp air with cooler, drier air. Use trickle vents if you have them - small openings in window frames that let air circulate when windows are shut. Leave these open year round. Extractor fans help remove moist air from kitchens and bathrooms and are cheap to run.

Keep doors shut and windows open when cooking or bathing. Leave gaps between furniture and walls, and air out wardrobes and cupboards occasionally.

Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) systems draw in dry air and expel moist air via a filter system, often through the loft. They improve air quality and reduce condensation, though installation can be costly.

Insulate and draught-proof your home:

Warm homes suffer less from condensation, so you should make sure your house is well insulated, from small things like draught excluders and draught proofing, to bigger jobs like loft, wall or floor insulation.

If you have an open fire that it is NOT in use, consider using a 'chimney sheep' to block draughts.

We may be able to find you a grant to help with larger measures such as wall insulation.



Simple steps to help draught-proof your home

Produce less moisture:

Simple things make a huge difference, like keeping lids on pans, & drying your clothes outdoors when possible.



In the winter, as long as it's not raining, clothes will dry outside, it will just take longer.

It is not a good idea to dry your washing directly on radiators.

Keep lids on pans when cooking

Make sure your tumble dryer is vented to the outside and avoid paraffin or flue-less bottled gas heaters as these emit a lot of moisture.

To contain moisture in the air from showering or bathing in the bathroom, close the door and keep any windows open or extractor fans turned on until the condensation clears.

DEALING WITH EXISTING BLACK MOULD

If you already have mould caused by excess condensation in the home, it's important to address both the cause and symptom as soon as early as possible. Here are some inexpensive ways to treat black mould:

Gently wipe away excess mould using a damp cloth/paper towel and dispose of it safely. Avoid brushing, as this can release spores into the air.

Treat the area with a specialist mould spray to remove staining, let it dry overnight, then apply an antifungal wash.



Use a specialist mould spray

A homemade solution of equal parts water and vinegar also works. Avoid bleach sprays, as they can worsen mould and cause it to spread. Bleach decolourizes the black marks of mould but does not remove the spores, which will usually lead to the mould returning.



Repainting with mould-resistant paint can help

You can also repaint affected areas with mould-resistant paint to help prevent regrowth.

Once mould appears, it can return - even years later. Mould spores stay in the home and can grow back whenever conditions become cold and damp again. Use our advice on ways to reduce condensation to prevent recurrence of black mould,



Always follow product instructions when using chemicals to treat mould. Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), like gloves and a mask.

MORE TIPS

You can catch condensation on windows using condensation channels or sponge strips (available at DIY stores).

Wipe down windows and sills each morning, but wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator.

A dehumidifier can also help, though they cost £40 - £200+ to buy, and run at 5p - 14p per hour. Good ventilation and sufficient heating are usually cheaper ways to effectively reduce moisture.

Using a hygrometer (humidity sensor) can help monitor room temperature and moisture levels. Ideally, indoor humidity should stay between 30% and 60% to avoid condensation problems and promote a healthy atmosphere.

Check areas prone to developing mould on a regular basis - inside wardrobes, behind beds and other pieces of furniture.

Always leave a gap between walls and furniture to promote air flow.

Extractor fans are very effective at removing moisture and are cheap to run - the average bathroom fan costs £3 a year in electricity costs.

Treat any signs of mould early and follow the advice in this guide to avoid reappearance of mould where possible.



Hygrometer

OTHER HELP AVAILABLE

Scan the QR code to view other relevant advice and accessibility options for this leaflet from our website



REMEMBER “H.I.V.E.”

When trying to prevent or reduce the effects of damp, mould and condensation, remember H.I.V.E.:

H

Heating – Use your heating system effectively. Warm air helps moisture move and reduces condensation. Keep TRVs on Level 1 in unused rooms to boost airflow. Damp air often condenses on cold surfaces like windows and external walls.

I

Insulation – Proper insulation reduces moisture buildup and heat loss. Aim for 270mm of loft insulation. Though wall insulation can be costly, it significantly improves heat retention and lowers energy bills.

V

Ventilation – Ventilate every room daily. In Germany, this is called Lüften: open all windows for 10–15 minutes each morning before turning on the heating. This replaces damp indoor air with dry, fresh air, improving air quality and warming the home more efficiently. Did you know we exhale up to 500ml of water during sleep?

E

Excess Moisture – Keep bathroom doors shut and windows or extractor fans open during and after showers until condensation clears. Extractor fans cost less than 1p an hour to run. Use pan lids and cooker extractors when cooking. In winter, dry clothes outside when possible, or use a dehumidifier or heated ailer to avoid adding excess moisture indoors.