

Looking after your home

Controlling condensation and mould in your home

A guide for tenants

There are three main causes of condensation

- Moisture produced by everyday activities.
- Not enough ventilation.
- Cool temperatures.









▲ Walls with black mould growth

Cooking, drying clothes, showering – even breathing – add to the moisture in the air. If this moisture is allowed to build up it can cause damp. This can increase the risk of respiratory illness and cause black mould growth on walls, ceilings, furniture and clothing.

Some people do not realise that this mould growth is often caused by condensation from normal activities, mistakenly thinking these are signs of damp caused by problems with the property itself. This leaflet gives helpful advice on how to treat condensation in the home.

How much moisture can be produced in your home in a day?

Two people active for one day		3 pints
Cooking and boiling a kettle		6 pints
Having a bath or shower		2 pints
Washing clothes		1 pint
Drying clothes		9 pints
Using a paraffin or bottled gas heater		3 pints

Total amount of moisture that can be produced in your home in one day **24 pints**

There are three main ways to tackle the problem

- Stop moisture building up.
- Ventilate, or air, the home.
- Keep your home warm.

Stop moisture building up

- Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles.
- Cover boiling pans when cooking.
- When cooking, bathing or washing and drying clothes, close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into colder rooms, even after you have finished.
- Cover fish tanks to stop the water evaporating into the air.
- Dry clothes outside where possible. Washing lines cannot be put up in internal areas.
- Make sure tumble dryers are vented to the outside.
- Avoid using bottled gas or paraffin heaters as these produce a lot of moisture and can also be a health and safety risk if not used and stored appropriately.

Ventilate, or air, the home

- When cooking or washing, open windows or use extractors.
- Where drying clothes inside is necessary, do so in a small room with windows open, doors closed and any extractor fan turned on.
- Open windows for a while each day or use the trickle/night vents.
- Do not block air vents – this is also important where gas and heating appliances are concerned as they need a supply of oxygen to work effectively and allow gases, such as carbon monoxide, to escape.
- Allow air to circulate around furniture and in cupboards – you can do this by making sure cupboards and wardrobes aren't overfilled and there is space between the furniture and the wall.

The extractor fans fitted in Norwich City Council homes are extremely energy efficient and have low running costs of just a few pence per day. It is very important that you leave these fans turned on and do not attempt to disable them by removing the fuses.

The fans are designed to remove moisture from the air and many of them have a 'boost' function which comes into operation when the moisture in the air is at its highest - such as after bathing or cooking. Turning off extractor fans means that moisture is not easily removed from inside your home which can lead to the formation of mould. This mould can damage your home, possessions and even your health.

Keep your home warm

- Draught proofing will keep your home warmer – and help reduce fuel bills. When the whole house is warmer, condensation is less likely to form.
- Insulating your loft and walls will help. If yours are not insulated, contact us on **0208 554 4400** for details of work planned for your area or advice on energy efficiency.
- Maintain a low heat when the weather is cold or wet – this is more effective than short bursts of high heat.

Important things to remember

- Do not block permanent ventilators.
- Do not turn off or remove fuses from any extractor fans installed in your home.
- Never block a chimney opening.
- Do not draught proof:
 - rooms where there is condensation or mould growth
 - rooms where there is a gas cooker or a fuel-burning heater, for example a gas fire
 - windows in the bathroom or kitchen.
- Do not put furniture against cold external walls.

What to do if your home already has mould

The tips set out should help prevent mould, but what if you already have the problem? How do you get rid of it?

- Do not disturb mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning. This can increase the risk of respiratory problems.

- Mould is a living organism and needs killing to get rid of it. To do this, wipe down affected areas with a fungicidal wash – one which carries a Health and Safety Executive approved number – making sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Do not use bleach or washing up liquid.

- Treat any mould you may already have in your home then do what you can to reduce condensation. This will restrict new mould growth.
- Clothes that have mould growing on them should be dry cleaned and carpets with mould on them should be shampooed.
- After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould recurring. **This paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper.**

I have followed the advice in this leaflet, what do I do next?

If you have followed all of the advice given in this leaflet, you should begin to notice a considerable improvement after four to six weeks. If the problem persists, it may be due to another cause of damp. There are four main causes of damp.

- **Condensation** – as discussed in this leaflet
- **Rising damp** – this is rare as a damp proof course prevents this but can usually be seen by a tide mark above the skirting board.



▲ Rising damp

- **Penetrating damp** – caused by a problem with the fabric of the building which means rainwater is able to get through the walls, roof, windows or doors.



▲ Penetrating damp becomes more noticeable when it rains



▲ Internal penetrating damp

- **Plumbing faults or broken leaking pipes**

Rising damp and penetrating damp can usually be easily identified at the early stages. A leaking pipe can be more difficult to identify, and if you suspect you may have a leaking pipe then this should be reported to the customer contact team on **0208 554 4400** as soon as possible.

If you have not seen obvious improvement after following our advice, or you suspect a more serious cause of damp, please contact us on **0208 554 4400**. We will arrange a visit to inspect your property.