

DEALING WITH DAMP AND CONDENSATION

Is your home damp?

Damp can cause mould on walls and furniture and make timber window frames rot.

Damp housing encourages the growth of mould and mites which can increase the risk of respiratory illness.

Some damp is caused by condensation.

This leaflet explains:

- how condensation forms and how you can keep it to a minimum, therefore reducing the risk of dampness and mould growth.
- where to go for help for different types of dampness.
- where dampness is the responsibility of the landlord or the tenant.



Types of dampness

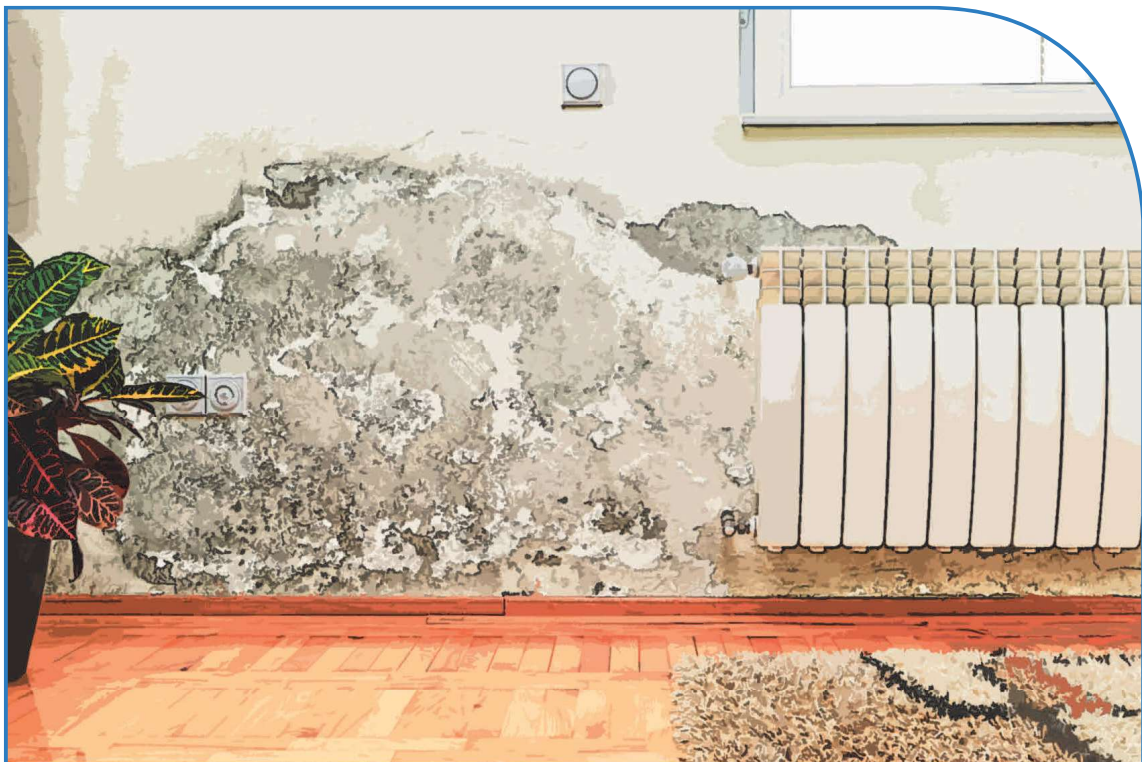
There are four main types of dampness that could affect your home. It is important to understand the difference between them so that you can effectively treat the problem.

1. Rising damp

This is caused by water rising from the ground into your home. Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms. It will normally rise no more than 300mm to 600mm above the ground level and usually leaves a 'tide mark' low down on the wall. You may also see white salts on the affected areas.

Typically the landlord would be responsible for resolving this issue.

Note - Black mould will rarely be seen where there is rising damp. This is because rising dampness carries with it ground salts which prevent the growth of black mould.



2. Penetrating dampness

This type of dampness will only be found on external walls or in the case of roof leaks, on ceilings. It only appears because of a defect outside the home, such as missing pointing to the brickwork, cracked rendering or missing roof tiles. These defects then allow water to pass from the outside to the inner surfaces. Penetrating damp normally appears as a well-defined 'damp patch' which looks and feels damp to the touch.

Typically the landlord would be responsible for resolving this issue

Note- Black mould is rarely seen on areas of penetrating dampness. This is because the affected area is usually too wet and contains salts which prevent the growth of black mould.



3. Defective plumbing

Leaks from water and waste pipes, especially in bathrooms and kitchens, are relatively common. They can affect both external and internal walls and ceilings. The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch and remains damp whatever the weather conditions outside.

A quick examination of the water and waste pipes serving the kitchen and bathroom and the seal around the bath, shower and sinks; plus the external pipework, such as guttering will usually find the source of the problem.



This can then be rectified or flagged with the landlord of the property for them to resolve.

Note - Black mould will rarely be seen with this type of dampness because the area is usually too wet and the chemicals in a waste water leak prevent mould growth.

4. Condensation

This is by far the most common cause of dampness experienced by tenants and householders, resulting in a large number of enquiries or complaints to the council.

Condensation is caused when water vapour or moisture is created inside your home and comes into contact with colder surfaces for example, a window, glazed tiles or a wall.

The resulting water drops may then soak into the paintwork creating ideal conditions for black mould spores to form.



Condensation mainly occurs in the colder months regardless of whether it is wet or dry outside.

It is usually found in corners and north facing walls or in areas where there is little air circulation such as in built-in cupboards or behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls.

High levels of moisture in the air in one part of the building (such as the kitchen and bathroom) can result in condensation occurring in another part of the building as the moisture will pass to the colder parts of the house.

Note - Black mould is frequently seen in this type of dampness.





Condensation and mould growth

Most homes will be affected by condensation at some point. However certain activities can increase the problem. Whether you are a home-owner or a tenant, condensation and mould growth is often due to habits and lifestyle and is something that can be reduced or remedied by the occupant.

Our everyday activities such as cooking, cleaning and bathing all add moisture to the air inside our homes.

Everything we do adds moisture to the air - even breathing!

See the table below how much extra moisture gets released into your home in a typical day.

Activity	Extra moisture
Two people at home for 16 hours	1.5 litres
Taking a bath or shower	1.0 litre
Drying clothes indoors	4.5 litres
Cooking and using a kettle	3.0 litres
Washing up	1.0 litre
So, every day activities add	11.0 litres of extra moisture

The amount of condensation in a home depends upon 3 factors:

1. how much water vapour is produced by the actions of its residents.
2. how cold or warm the property is.
3. how much air circulation (ventilation there is).

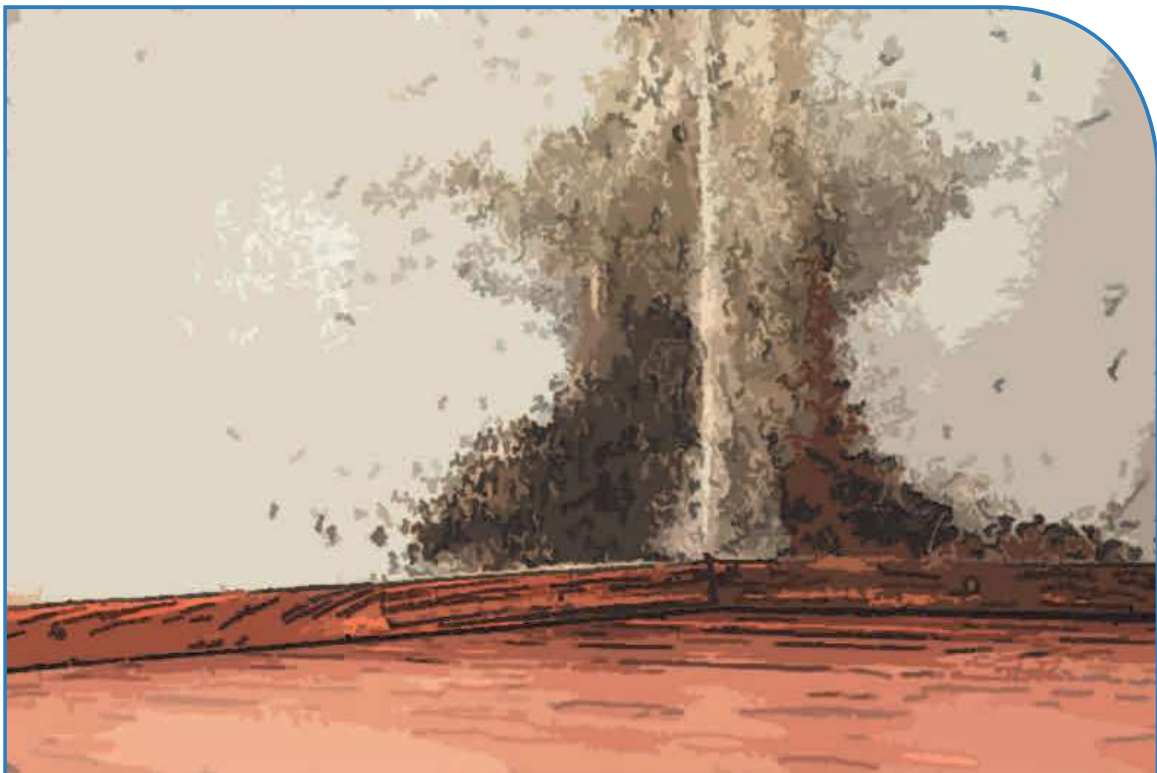
Black mould

Mould spores are invisible to the naked eye. They are always present in the atmosphere both inside and outside your home.

They only become visible when they land on a surface and multiply.

Mould needs four things to survive:

1. **food** - such as wallpaper or emulsion paint.
2. **moisture** - obtained from the condensation droplets.
3. **a suitable temperature** - supplied by the householder.
4. **oxygen** - found in your home.



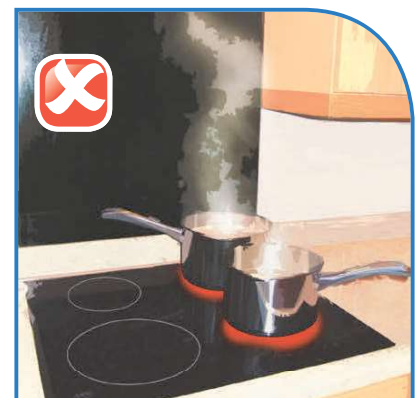


How to combat condensation

There are six easy steps to deal with condensation. Following them will help keep your home free from condensation and mould.

1. Produce less moisture

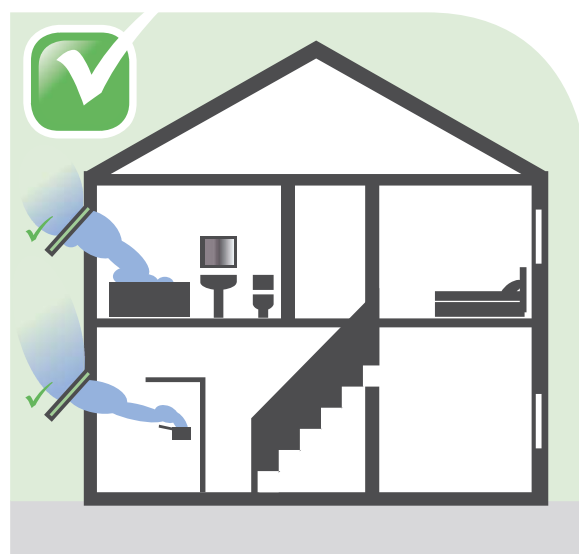
- cover your pans when cooking and do not leave kettles boiling.
- avoid drying clothes on radiators or in front of fires as the moisture from the clothes will condense on the windows, walls and ceilings. Dry your clothes outside, or in the bathroom with the door closed and either an extraction fan on or a window open.
- vent tumble dryer to the outside (never into the home).
- avoid using oil and portable non-flued bottled gas heaters, these types of heater produce large amounts of water vapour (Approximately 1 litre of water is produced for each 1 litre of fuel used).



2. Ventilate to remove moisture

Homes can be ventilated without making draughts;

- always ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when you are using them by opening the windows, or mechanical extraction fan.
- close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use. Closed doors help prevent moisture reaching other rooms.
- open bedroom windows in the morning to allow moisture built up over-night to escape.
- ventilate cupboards and wardrobes.
- leave space between the back of furniture and cold walls.
- permanent vents such as air bricks and trickle vents should be used to allow a little background ventilation.
- when replacing windows make sure the new windows or frames have trickle ventilators.



3. Wipe away excess moisture

Wipe moisture from windows and sills every morning (just opening a window will not remove it).



4. Heating

Appropriate controllable heating should be properly installed and maintained. The correct use of heating systems will help reduce condensation problems.

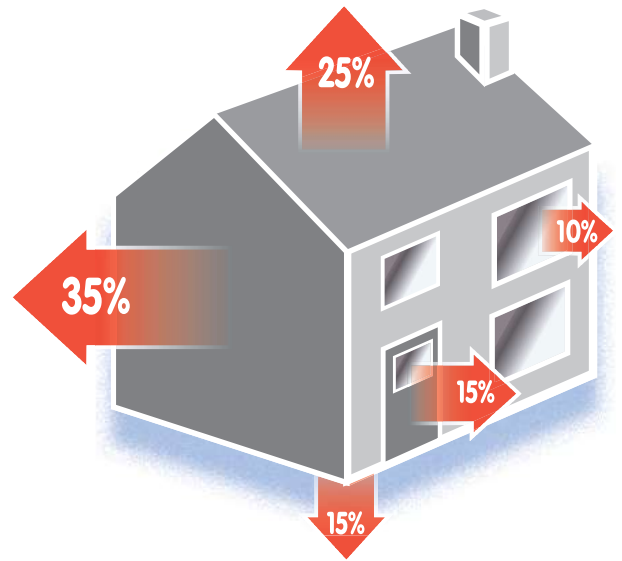
- the ideal indoor temperature is around 21 °C.
- central heating is usually the best form of heating.
- thermostatic valves on individual radiators and heaters help control heating to individual rooms.
- in cold weather the best way to keep rooms warm and avoid condensation is to keep low background heat on all day in every room, rather than short bursts of high heat.
- heating and ventilation increases air movement through convection and reduces the likelihood of condensation.
- avoid using portable gas and paraffin heaters where possible as these produce moisture as the fuel burns.

5. Insulate and draught proof

This picture shows how heat is lost from different parts of the average home.

Take steps to prevent it:

- insulate your loft to a depth of 280mm remember the loft hatch will need draught proofing.
- insulate any gaps between joists in the cellar.
- insulate your cavity walls or for houses without cavity walls use insulated plasterboards on internal walls.
- draught proof your windows and external doors.
- secondary or double glazing windows will reduce heat loss and draughts.



You may be able to get some assistance and advice by contacting Better Homes Yorkshire: free phone 08005971500, local number 0113 8970977.

Alternatively you can email www.betterhomesyorkshire.co.uk

6. Treat black mould

- first treat the mould. Once the cause of the condensation has been resolved the mould should not reappear.
- to kill and remove mould wipe down the affected areas with a fungicidal wash. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- after treating affected areas, redecorate with an oil-based sealer or primer, followed by a fungicidal paint.

- if wall paper is to be replaced it should be replaced once condensation has been eliminated and a fungicidal wall paper paste should be used.
- dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets, but avoid breathing mould spores in.
- finally, the last way to avoid mould is to eliminate dampness.

If the landlord has provided correct levels of insulation, suitable heating and ventilation then it will usually be the responsibility of the tenant to treat for mould.

Advice for tenants

Where dampness is affecting private tenant's homes this leaflet should identify the likely cause. If it is due to inadequate heating systems, ventilation, or insulation leading to condensation and black mould growth or if it is due to rising damp, penetrating dampness or defective plumbing then these will usually be the responsibility of the landlord.

The first approach to seek improvements is to contact your landlord/agent and explain the issues. Confirm the issues in an email or letter and allow at least 14 days for them to reply/ take action. Remember to keep a copy of the correspondence to provide to us if we get involved. Taking photographs of the issues as evidence is also advised.

Where the landlord/agent is reluctant to make improvements then contact Harrogate Borough Council's Private Sector Housing team on 01423 500600 or email; privatehousing@harrogate.gov.uk. We will give advice and in some cases, take action where landlords fail to attend to serious hazards.