

- Allow adequate air circulation around large pieces of furniture
- Remember that portable gas and paraffin heaters give off a lot of water
- Put lids on saucepans

## Getting rid of mould

First treat any mould you may already have in your home. If you then deal with the basic problem of condensation, mould should not reappear.

A solution of water and vinegar will remove light mould staining on hard surfaces (such as painted surfaces). To kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash. Follow the manufacturers instructions precisely. Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets. Disturbing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning may increase the risk of respiratory problems.

After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould recurring.

But note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpapers.

The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould growth is to eliminate dampness.

## Further information

Mid Sussex District Council  
Housing Standards Team

Telephone: 01444 477292

Fax: 01444 477366

E-mail: [housingstandards@midsussex.gov.uk](mailto:housingstandards@midsussex.gov.uk)

Or see the Housing Standards section on the councils website, [www.midsussex.gov.uk](http://www.midsussex.gov.uk)

“Diagnosing the Causes of Dampness”, a more comprehensive guide to the causes, diagnosis and remedies of dampness can be purchased from BRE, Garston, Watford, WD2 7JR or see their website which is [www.bre.co.uk](http://www.bre.co.uk)

To find out more about help towards insulation, please contact the Energy Savings Trust on 0300 123 1234 or [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

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# Keep your home free from damp and mould

Housing Standards Leaflet No. 3



Dampness is a major problem in many houses and flats. Damp housing encourages the growth of mould and house dust mites and can increase the risk of respiratory illness. It can cause mould on walls and furniture and make timber window frames, floors and skirting boards rotten. It can damage wall plaster and may also give rise to dry rot.

Dampness in buildings can be divided into three main areas or causes: rising damp, penetrating damp and condensation. They often look the same and many people cannot distinguish one from the other. But they are not the same thing.

## Is your home damp?

The first thing to do is to establish the cause of the damp.

### Repair Problems (penetrating damp)

Is there a leak in the roof or gutters, rainwater pipes or even the main water supply pipe? Defects of this sort should be relatively straight forward to fix once they have been tracked down, though the dampness may then take some time to dry out.

Maintenance is extremely important to keep buildings in good order. It is far better to sort things out before they become a serious problem, so regular checking and planned repairs are the best approach.

### Rising Damp

Dampness in ground floor rooms can also be caused by rising dampness, which means that water from the ground is getting into the walls

and floors, often because a damp proof course (DPC) or damp proof membrane (DPM) is not working or (in the case of many old buildings) because the property was built without such damp proofing.

If you have damp check for the following problems:

- Rubbish or soil piled up against the house wall above the level of any DPC
- Missing or slipped roof slates or tiles
- Damaged flat roof coverings
- Damage or cracking to brickwork or external rendering
- Rotten or leaking window cills
- Broken or blocked guttering or rainwater downpipes
- Blocked or missing air bricks
- Crumbling brickwork or rendering to chimneys

### What is condensation?

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 or shower.

Household activities such as cooking, bathing, washing and drying of clothes and also normal breathing, are major sources of moisture generation. Other causes of moisture can be from flueless paraffin or bottle gas heaters as well as unvented tumble dryers.

On soft or absorbent surfaces you cannot see the water droplets as they are absorbed, but

they can be seen clearly on non-absorbent, glossy surfaces such as the glass in windows and on tiling.

If condensation is not dealt with it can rot the wood of any doors and window frames and also damage furnishings and decorations.

Mould will grow as a result of condensation and will be clearly seen on walls, furnishings and even clothing. Severe mould growth increases the risk of causing or exacerbating asthma and other respiratory illnesses due to the inhalation of spores.

### How can I reduce condensation?

Condensation gets much worse in cold weather. It can be reduced as much as possible by following a few simple tips:

- Do not block air vents in walls or floors and use extractor fans (if fitted) in kitchens and bathrooms
- Keep the kitchen window open when cooking but keep the door closed (to stop the moist air getting into other rooms)
- Close the bathroom door when running or using the bath
- After bathing or showering open the window to let the steam out.
- Heat the whole house rather than just one or two rooms
- Make sure you vent tumble dryers to the outside of the house
- If you are blocking a fire place, fit an air vent to the chimney flue
- Check that the roof space is properly vented and insulated \*
- Consider installing cavity wall insulation\*
- Insulate and draughtproof your home and keep it warm\*