

Damp is a serious problem, both for your home and your health, and it's important to deal with it and try to find the cause. Damp air is also more difficult to warm up, which can result in higher heating bills.

Sources of damp

Damp can be caused by condensation of water vapour in the air, forming on cold areas on walls and windows.

Other reasons for damp include leaky pipes or rain entering the structure either directly or from guttering and drainpipes. This is often called 'penetration damp'.

'Rising damp' results from water rising up from the ground and could indicate a breach in the damp course level. This is the least common cause.

To reduce the risk of **penetration damp** keep your pipes, guttering and drainpipes well maintained and free from leaves and vegetation. Remember that as the intensity of rain increases gutters and drainpipes may need to be bigger.

If you think you may have **rising damp** you should consult an expert.

Most damp and mould is caused by condensation in the home.

Damp caused by condensation

Condensation damp comes from moisture in the air. When the moisture finds a cold(er) surface it condenses. A good example of this is the condensation you see on the inside of windows during the winter months.

If the condensation persists on surfaces, then it is likely to turn into patches of mould. Mould generates spores which are bad for your health, particularly for those with respiratory problems. Mould from condensation nearly always appears as small black dots or patches.

Preventing condensation damp

Condensation damp can be addressed or prevented by reducing the amount of moisture in the air. This can be achieved through adequate ventilation and heating and through changes in behaviour. Ventilation is essential in any home to prevent a build-up of stale air and to get rid of excess moisture. This can be achieved in a number of ways including through opening a window regularly, window trickle vents, airbricks or some form of extraction such as a cooker hood or extractor fan.

Tips for dealing with condensation damp and mould in your home

- **Condensation from windows** should be mopped up every morning and the water put down the sink. A window vac can make this easier.
- **Kitchens and bathrooms** are often a source of warm humid air from cooking, kettles, showers etc. Keep the doors into the rest of the property closed and open a window or use an extractor fan. Extractor fans don't use much electricity, but they make a big difference to humidity levels in the home, particularly in the winter months. Wipe down shower screens after using.
- **Cold walls and ceilings** - It is usually the coldest parts of the home where you'll find the moisture that causes condensation and mould, or in areas with poor air circulation. In the corners of rooms, around windows, on bathroom ceilings if you have inadequate ventilation and/or poor loft insulation.
- Remember that if you're **drying clothes indoors**, all of the water that's in them as you take them out of the machine can end up in the walls, ceiling, furniture of your home as they dry. Wherever possible dry outdoors or if needed in a tumble dryer (use of tumble drier balls can reduce energy use by up to 40%).
- There will be more humid air **the more people and pets there are in a house**, through the essential act of breathing. If there are lots of people and pets, ventilation is even more important.
- **Our beds** absorb about half a pint of moisture per person each night. To keep your bed and pillows fresh don't make your bed in the morning but leave the covers open to ventilate.
- **Open your windows** regularly to replace damp air with dry air – especially in the mornings
- If mould is starting to grow, don't let it spread. Use an **anti-mould spray** and wipe dry. You can use diluted bleach or white vinegar if you are concerned about chemicals. There are also eco anti-mould sprays available.

If your home is still suffering from damp and mould after you've taken these steps, then there may be an underlying problem and you may have to get the advice of a damp specialist.

If you are a tenant, put your concerns in writing to your landlord, stating the problem, where it is and what steps you have taken to try to resolve it. If your landlord is not willing to help, the Environmental Health team at the council can often intervene.

If you need further advice or support with damp in your home, our team of expert Home Energy Advisors can help.

Please call us on 0800 112 3044 or email advice@sdce.org.uk