

What is condensation?

There is always moisture in the air and we add to it through the things we do in our everyday lives, such as cooking, washing, drying clothes and even breathing!

Warm air can hold more moisture than cold air can, so condensation is more likely to be a problem in a cold or poorly insulated home with lots of cold surfaces. It can also happen because of a lack of ventilation. These are often connected, because we tend not to ventilate rooms enough if the home is difficult to keep warm.

Condensation can cause a damp problem if it happens a lot and doesn't dry out during the day, and it encourages mould growth and an increase in the amount of dust mites.

Dust mites and mould spores can cause, or make worse, allergic reactions and respiratory (breathing) illness.

There are several other possible causes of damp in the home, such as blocked gutters, a leaky roof or rising damp. Symptoms of condensation damp are;

- there is mould growing on the damp area
- it is on the coldest surfaces
- it is in rooms with little heating and ventilation
- it gets worse in cold rather than wet weather



How to avoid condensation damp

1) Ventilation

People breathe out moist air, so every room needs some background ventilation.

It is possible to provide this while still getting rid of the most uncomfortable draughts. Modern windows have narrow ventilators at the top called trickle ventilators —these should be kept open all the time except in very severe cold weather.

2) Insulation

Insulating your home keeps the heat in, makes it easier to keep it warm, and can save you energy and money. Where the building is insulated, the surfaces will be warmer, and condensation is less likely to be a problem.

“Condensation occurs when warm moist air meets a cold surface. It cools down and then deposits the moisture on the surface. The change from vapour (in the air) to liquid (on the surface) is called condensation”

3) Heating

Condensation is best avoided by a fairly even background level of heat throughout the house. Try not to leave rooms completely unheated in very cold weather. Warm moist air from the rooms you are using will travel through to colder areas and cause condensation on cold spots such as the outer walls of unheated rooms.

4) Cooking and Washing

Put lids on pans if possible, and ventilate the room by opening a window or back door, or using an extractor fan. If you close the inner door at the same time you will encourage the moisture to go outside rather than into the rest of the house.

5) Drying clothes

Do this outside if you can, or in a tumble dryer vented to outside. If neither is possible, dry them in a well ventilated room with the inner door closed.

Tips to prevent condensation problems

Do...

- keep lids on pans when cooking
- use extractor fans in bathrooms and kitchens
- dry your clothes outside
- open the windows after a bath or a shower and close the inner door.



Don't...

- block off any ventilation around the house that lets moisture out such as airbricks and trickle ventilators on windows
- use tumble dryers without a vent to the outside. Check that vents are fitted properly with no leaks.
- use paraffin or bottle gas heaters in unventilated rooms.
- keep the inner door open when cooking in the kitchen or bathing in the bathroom.



Greening South West Workplaces

The South West Trades Union Congress, supported by the South West Regional Development Agency, is running a project using the reach of trade unions to change the way people work.

- Trade union members can champion environmental issues in the workplace
- The project is training and supporting a network of green reps across the South West
- The project is helping to find practical solutions that reps can bring to the workplace
- Green reps can be the link between staff and management to encourage change through the workforce
- Unions can reach out to new members who feel strongly about the impact on the environment
- Unions can work with employers to improve business performance and reputation



Greening the workplace makes good sense for everyone.

To get involved in greening your workplace speak to your union environmental or green representative – or contact your union or the TUC to find out more about becoming a rep yourself.

For further information contact the South West TUC.

Tel: 0117 947 0521

Email: southwest@tuc.org.uk

www.greenworkplacessouthwest.org.uk



For free, independent and local energy saving advice call the Energy Saving Trust.

Tel: 0800 512 012

Special thanks to Severn Wye Energy Agency for the use of their information in the production of this leaflet.

www.swea.co.uk

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TUC energy awareness



GREEN UNIONS AT WORK

Condensation and its causes

