

Mould, Damp and Condensation

Dampness is a problem in many homes and can lead to the deterioration of furniture, ceilings, walls and window sills. Condensation is a major issue as it can cause damp and lead to mould growth in homes. By using the information in this leaflet you will be able to:

- ✓ Identify damp and condensation
- ✓ Treat mould growth
- ✓ Reduce condensation

Not only does damp and mould growth affect the interior of the home, but it could also affect you. Research from the World Health Organisation shows people who live in well insulated and adequately ventilated accommodation are less likely to visit their doctor or be admitted to hospital due to respiratory conditions.

Identification.....

There are 4 main types of damp. They are listed below along with the characteristics associated with them.

Penetrating Damp

- Only found on the external walls in your home, or, in the case of a roof leak it may be found on ceilings.
- Appears due to defects outside the home, such as, missing pointing to brickwork or missing roof tiles.
- More noticeable following rainfall and may appear as a well defined damp patch which looks and feels damp to touch.
- Black mould is rare with penetrating dampness due to the affected area being too wet, and also because the dampness will contain salts from passing through the wall.

Rising damp

- Caused by water rising from the ground into the home.
- Water gets round or through a broken damp proof course or passes through the brickwork.
- Will only affect basements and ground floor rooms.
- Will normally rise no more than 12 to 24 inches above ground level and will usually leave a tide mark low down on the wall.
- Black mould is rarely seen on rising damp due to the dampness carrying ground salts which prevent mould growth.

Defective Plumbing

- Leaks from water or waste pipes, commonly in kitchens and bathrooms.
- By examining waste and water pipes serving the kitchen and bathroom, and the seals around the bath, shower and sinks, as well as the external pipes and guttering, you will usually find the source of the problem.
- Black mould rarely accompanies dampness caused by defective plumbing because the area is too wet and chemicals in waste water leaks will prevent mould growth.

Condensation

- The most common cause of dampness.
- Caused by water vapour or moisture inside the dwelling coming into contact with the colder surfaces, windows and walls.
- Resultant water drops (condensation) may then soak into the wallpaper, paintwork or plasterwork.
- This mainly happens in colder months regardless of the weather.
- Black mould is frequently seen with this type of dampness and is normally found in areas of poor air circulation, for example, behind sofas, beds or wardrobes pushed up against external walls.

Dealing with it.....

If the problem is not from a leak or because of a faulty or non-existent damp course, then it is likely due to condensation.

Enquiries and complaints about condensation related dampness and mould growth are commonly received by Flintshire County Council.

Certain activities through our habits and lifestyle can increase the problems related to condensation and mould growth and in turn can be reduced or remedied by the occupant.

Moulds only grow where there is sufficient moisture. When it appears consider what actions and activities in your home are leading to the excess moisture in the air.

Three main factors contribute to condensation:

1. **Humidity of indoor air.**
Warm air holds more moisture than cold air. For example, a warm shower or bath will cause steam. As the air in the bathroom fills with water vapour, tiny drops of water appear and develop on cold surfaces such as mirrors and window sills.
2. **Low temperatures.**
Condensation will be worse when it is cold. When the humid air contacts cold indoor surfaces, it transforms into surface mist and then into water that runs down windows and walls causing wooden window frames to rot or wallpaper and painted walls to blister.
3. **Poor Ventilation**
Humidity of indoor air can be reduced by ventilation. Condensation will lead to mould and damp problems if air exchange is inadequate.

Prevention is better than cure.....

As many of our daily activities produce a lot of moisture, a number of these techniques may be able to help you to produce less:

- Dry you're washing outside when possible. Or, if you have to dry inside, consider hanging clothes on a clothes airer in the bathroom with the door closed and either have the extractor fan switched on or a window slightly open.
- Put lids on pans and saucepans when cooking to stop the steam escaping.
- Vent tumble driers to the outside of the home or consider investing in a condenser type tumble drier.
- Use a dry cloth or rag to wipe down any condensation from windows and sills especially in the bathroom, kitchen and the bedroom.
- Ventilate. Remove excess moisture by ventilating rooms. This can be done without causing draughts or making your home cold. By opening windows slightly from time to time or by opening trickle vents on UPVC windows you can allow warm, moist air to escape and let cool dry air in.
- When using kitchen or bathroom facilities, open the window and close the door to prevent moisture travelling to other parts of your home.
- Open bedroom windows as soon as you arise and throw back the sheets or duvet to air the bed and bedding.
- Leave space between backs or furniture and cold walls.
- Keep a low background heat on most of the day instead of having short bursts of high heat. This will keep rooms warm and avoid condensation. Having good heating controls on your radiators, room thermostats and a timer will help control heating through the house and help manage costs.
- Insulate and draught proof. Consider insulating the loft, draught proofing windows and external doors. Consider getting cavity wall insulation, UPVC windows or secondary glazing. You could also research whether or not you are eligible for financial assistance or other help.

If problems persist.....

Despite taking preventative steps to reduce condensation, some households can find humidity remains a problem. It may be worth considering:

- Covering cold services, such as, covering cold water pipes with insulation.
- Installing a means of ventilation on chimney breasts and in rooms.
- Draught proofing windows and doors.

Removing mould.....

Black mould can grow on walls, ceilings, furnishings, clothes and toys which can prove most unpleasant! Here are a number of tips to consider when removing it:

- Do not brush mould as it will cause spores to be released into the air.
- Close doors and open the windows during and after you remove the mould.
- Wear rubber gloves and remove excess mould with a damp cloth before disposing of it afterwards.
- Using a fungicidal wash or a diluted bleach, wipe down the affected area. Dispose of this cloth and using a fresh dry cloth wipe down the washed area removing moisture from the cleaning process.
- Once removed, all surfaces in the room should be thoroughly cleaned, either by wet wiping or by vacuum.
- Once dried, you could then consider redecorating using a fungicidal paint or wall paper paste.

In summary.....

Everyday activities add moisture to the air in our homes. The illustration offers an insight of how much extra water you could be producing in your home in a day:-

2 people at home for 16 hours	□□□	3 pints
A bath or shower	□□	2 pints
Drying clothes indoors	□□□ □□□ □□□	9 pints
Cooking and use of a kettle	□□□ □□□	6 pints
Washing dishes	□□	2 pints
Bottled gas heater	□□□ □	(8 hours use) 4 pints

Finally.....

Avoid damp and mould in your home by:

- Removing mould as soon as it appears.
- Opening windows for short periods at least 2 – 3 times a day.
- Making the most of mechanical ventilation if it's installed.
- Not letting rooms and walls become cold.
- Carrying out maintenance checks and always repairing any leaks and external building defects at your home.