Hensons

Introduction

Condensation can cause mould growth in your home. Severe condensation can cause damage to your home. Condensation and its affects are the responsibility of the tenant, this guide is here to help you identify, understand and control condensation in your home.

What is condensation?

- There is always some moisture in the air; however this cannot always be seen.
- Condensation develops when moist air in the home comes into contact with cold internal surfaces e.g. external walls, single glazed windows, cold water pipes, lintels or window reveals.
- As air cools, it can hold less moisture, so droplets of water begin to form, especially on cold surfaces, this is called condensation.

Identifying condensation

- Condensation will leave moisture on cold walls and surfaces.
- A black coloured mould usually accompanies this moisture.
- Mould growth can affect, walls, ceilings and window frames, as well as your clothes, bedding and decorations.

Why do I have condensation?

Condensation can develop during many daily activities for example cooking, showering and drying clothes on radiators, also where paraffin or butane heaters are used and unvented tumble dryers. When the moist air produced during these activities settles on cold surfaces; walls and ceilings can soak up the drops of water causing dampness. It will also occur behind furniture and in cupboards on external walls where there is restricted air movement.

Why is condensation and dampness a problem?

If left untreated, condensation can lead to many problems. On the surface mould can grow on ceilings, walls, furniture and even on clothes. A more serious problem may not show at first, but if dampness develops, it can lead to wood rot, it will also damage any surface that is corrosive e.g. older radiators.

Is all dampness a result of condensation?

Dampness is not always a result of condensation. There are two basic types of damp;

- Penetrating damp occurs when water enters your home through external faults such as a faulty roof.
- Rising damp is due to a failure with the damp proofing or membrane of your home where water gets into the home through walls and floors. Usual indications of rising damp in walls; there is usually a fairly regular horizontal tidemark up to a couple of meters above the floor. Below it the wall is usually discoloured, darkening, patchiness ,maybe mould growth, loose wallpaper, salts in the tidemark. In severe cases rotting skirting and powdery plaster may occur. This form of dampness usually has a direct cause and so can be easier to stop, for example, fixing any leaks to stop water entering from the outside. Condensation however requires constant control, the best methods can be seen below.

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Control, prevention and removal of condensation and dampness

Producing less moisture in your home will help prevent and reduce the effects of condensation and dampness. To control condensation, please follow these simple steps.

Control moisture

- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed when in use to stop steam reaching cold surfaces in other rooms.
- Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles to stop mould growing.
- Keep rooms ventilated by opening windows and using extractor fans to allow steam to escape.
- If you have UPVC windows fitted with an air vent, leave in the open position when there is a likelihood of condensation forming.
- Do not obstruct or seal air vents.
- Do not draught proof rooms where condensation or dampness is present.
- Allow air to circulate around the home by moving furniture away from cold external walls.
- Remove any visible mould by using a fungicidal wash to help prevent further growth.
- Try to keep your home at an even temperature at all times so walls and surfaces become warmer.

Produce less moisture

- Cover pots and pans when cooking.
- Dry clothes outside instead of on radiators.
- If you use a clothes dryer, make sure it is ventilated to the outside of your home.
- When filling a bath, fill with cold water first, then add hot water.

Keep your home warm

A constant warm temperature in the home will keep condensation to a minimum. To do this a few steps can be taken to insulate your home, making it warmer, reducing condensation and cutting your fuel bills.

- Ensure you have good insulation in cavity walls, the roof and flooring, this will help reduce heat loss.
- Maintain a constant temperature when heating your home.
- Install double glazing; this will reduce draughts and minimise heat loss, however you must make sure there is good ventilation in the room so that any moisture produced can escape.

Removing mould

Mould growth is a sign of moisture presence and indicates that there is a problem with ventilation and heating.

- Kill and remove mould using a fungicidal wash.
- Do not brush or vacuum mould away.
- Once the mould has been removed, redecorate with a fungicidal paint.
- Do not simply repaint or wallpaper over, as this will not kill the mould.

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Can I spot condensation?

To some extent identifying condensation comes with a mixture of knowledge and experience. There are a few factors that are pointers towards the property being likely to have condensation. Probably the most important one is how the house is utilised. We found that houses that are occupied by many people, such as large families, or what is known as multi-occupied properties, or HMO's (houses in multiple occupation), where there is a great deal of steam cooking or alternatively a lot of showering going on without suitable ventilation, these properties tend to be more prone to condensation.

A lot of steam cooking

What does condensation look like?

Condensation can take many forms, literally from liquid on the walls to mould on the walls.

Mould from condensation to a bay wall

Mould from condensation in the corner of a bedroom