



Damp and Condensation Factsheet

Our cold and wet climate can cause problems of dampness inside the home. We often don't ventilate our homes enough because it's too cold to open windows, or if we do, the moisture may not dissipate very well, as the humidity outside is often also very high. Many homes suffer from issues of damp and condensation – which can cause rot and mould.

Excess moisture at home

People produce moisture from breathing and sweating, which is hard to avoid, but there are other sources of damp air in the home, such as laundry, cooking and bathing. The moisture caused by these activities needs to be reduced as much as possible to avoid mould and rot.

In the kitchen

In the kitchen, always keep lids on pans to reduce any escaping steam. This also keeps the heat in and saves energy. Keep cooking times and temperatures to a minimum, and only boil the amount of water you need. If the kitchen becomes steamy, close the door to the rest of the house and open the window or use an extractor fan to get rid of the moist air.

Drying clothes

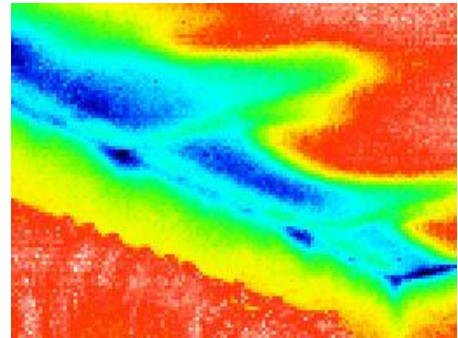
Always hang wet laundry outside to dry if possible. If this is not possible, it's best to use a tumble drier (vented to the outside) or a dehumidifier. Dehumidifiers may be slower, but are smaller, cheaper to buy and cheaper to run per hour than a tumble drier – and combat general household dampness as well as helping to dry laundry. Several litres of water can evaporate from a load of wet washing.



In the bathroom

Bathrooms should always have an extractor fan fitted to vent steamy air to the outside. Bathroom doors should be closed to the rest of the house, and steam should be vented through the extractor fan or through an open window.

Despite these measures, sometimes damp and mould will persist. Warm air can hold moisture better than cold air, so when the temperature drops, such as on a cold surface, or in a cold room, condensation will form, and this can lead to mould or rot. It will tend to form in the coldest places, so insulation will help. Mould forming at the edge of bedroom ceilings, for example, may indicate that loft insulation above the room does not extend fully to the edge. This can be seen in thermal images.



Thermal imaging showing the cold edges of a ceiling.



In order to ventilate a home with fresh air whilst losing as little heat as possible in a cold climate, rather than leaving windows slightly open for a long time, causing constant heat loss, it can be more effective to briefly open windows and doors wide to quickly refresh the air without allowing time for walls, furniture and house contents to cool down. This can be done periodically as required.

Black mould should always be removed for health reasons. It releases tiny spores into the air which, when breathed in, can be harmful. It can be cleaned away using bleach or a bleach-based anti-mould spray. In places where black mould can be persistent, mould proof paints can be used to prevent or slow down its return, and make it easier to wipe away should it reappear.