



Your guide to **Damp, Mould & Condensation**





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Residents should note that the information contained within this handbook is supported by the Gravesham Borough Council's policies.

Damp & Mould



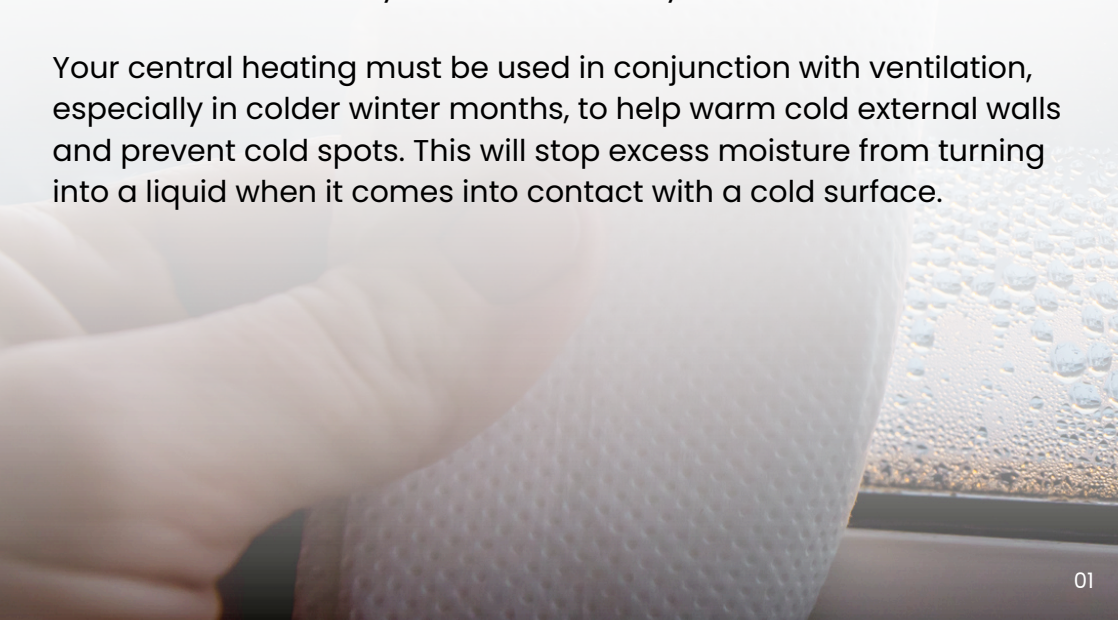
Condensation advice

Condensation is the most common cause of mould growth in modern properties.

Air in your home holds moisture, the warmer the air the more moisture it can hold. When warm, moist air comes into contact with a cold surface (for example a glass windowpane or external wall) the air can no longer hold the moisture and it turns into a liquid in the form of water droplets. The water then helps to germinate mould spores, causing them to grow.

The primary cause of condensation is lack of ventilation and improper use of heating. When moist air builds up inside your property it is important to remove it by means of ventilation. This will allow fresh, dry air to circulate in your home.

Your central heating must be used in conjunction with ventilation, especially in colder winter months, to help warm cold external walls and prevent cold spots. This will stop excess moisture from turning into a liquid when it comes into contact with a cold surface.





Ventilation

Remove excess moisture by opening windows at opposite ends of the property, especially after bathing or cooking. This is known as cross ventilation.

- Keep trickle vents open on windows.
- Do not block air bricks, passive vents or extraction fans.
- Avoid opening windows on damp or humid days as this can introduce more moisture into your home. It is best to open windows on dry days
- Keep central heating low but consistent. We recommend setting a constant temperature between 16 and 20 degrees Celsius and boosting when required. This will help get warmth into your walls and reduce cold spots.
- Ensure radiators are kept clear, this will allow heat to circulate properly.
- Do not put your heating on high for short periods of time and then turn it off completely. This creates warm air but does not warm walls which leads to cold spots and condensation.
- Ensure the thermostatic radiator valves are open and each one is on the same setting.

This will ensure an even heat throughout your home.



Reducing moisture

Along with proper use of heating and ventilation, a key part of preventing condensation is reducing the amount of moisture we create at home.

Moisture is created by day-to-day activities such as bathing, cooking, boiling water, drying wet laundry or even breathing. The average person can add up to nine litres of moisture in the air per day.

For modern households, these are things we cannot live without but what is important is how to reduce the moisture created by these activities.

You can reduce moisture in a number of ways

Avoid drying wet washing on radiators. If you do not have access to an outdoor area, use an airer placed in a warm, well-ventilated room that is shut off from the rest of the property.

- When running a bath try filling with cold water first. This can reduce moisture created by 80%.
- Always ventilate an area by opening a window or using an extraction fan (if available) when creating excess moisture such as cooking or bathing. Please ensure the room is left well-ventilated for a while after you are finished to help remove all of the moisture.
- Shut internal doors to rooms where excess moisture is being created. This will prevent the moisture from travelling into cold rooms and turning into condensation.
- Place damp crystals or mini dehumidifiers near windows and other areas that are common for condensation. They will help absorb any excess moisture that may not have escaped your home.
- Cover pots and pans when cooking.
- Wipe down any visible condensation or water as soon as possible. The longer water sits on a surface the more likely mould will grow.



Produce less moisture

- Cover cooking pans and avoid kettles boiling for longer than necessary.
- Dry your laundry outdoors, or hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window open, or use an extractor fan.
- Vent any tumble dryer to the outside of your home.



Ventilate to remove moisture

You can ventilate your home without creating draughts:

- Keep small windows or a ventilator open when someone is in the room.
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by opening windows.
- Close kitchen/bathroom doors when rooms are in use, even if you have an extractor fan.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes. Overfilling them prevents air from circulating. Keep a gap between the wall and furniture so that air can circulate.

Most of the damp and mould problems reported to us are related to condensation.

This occurs mostly during cold weather spells, regardless of whether it is raining or not.

Condensation will encourage black mould on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. We will check whether there is water leaking into the property, but if nothing is found you must manage the condensation.



Surface mould

Surface mould is one of the most common forms of mould and usually forms in small areas, but if left untreated it can spread rapidly.

- It forms due to a build-up of condensation.
- Usually found in cold areas such as corners of rooms, on ceilings and around windows.
- Can be removed using an anti-fungal spray or mould cleaner.
- It is easily preventable.



Damp

Damp forms when water is able to penetrate into your building from outside. It is usually linked to a building defect.

Look out for the following signs that you may have damp:

- discolouration of the area. Usually a damp patch will appear.
- damage to walls such as blown plaster or bubbling paint work.
- dark mould formation.

If you think there is damp in your property, please advise us immediately.



Water leaks

Water leaks can lead to mould growth if left unrepaired. Leaks can easily be identified by:

- yellow staining in the area mould is forming.
- damage to plaster or bubbling paint work.

If you think there is a water leak in your property, please contact us immediately.

Cleaning & removing damp or mould

There are a wide variety of anti-mould products available, most of which sell you a dream but rarely deliver the results. After years of testing, we have found a simple mixture of white vinegar and water works best for removal of surface mould. All you need is a spray bottle, some white vinegar and water. Just add 1 cup of water and 1 cup of white vinegar in a spray bottle and you will have an effective mould cleaner for a fraction of the cost.

If you have already bought a mould cleaner, please make sure it does not contain any bleach as this can feed the mould and could cause it to grow back fast.



Preparing to clean mould

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Cleaning mould

1

First make sure you spray the mould and surrounding area with the white vinegar and water mix ensuring the area is well saturated. Never try to brush or clean mould whilst it is dry as it will cause the spores to spread into the air.

2

Once you have sprayed the mould use a dry cloth to collect the mould and remove it, do not re-use the cloth in other areas without thoroughly washing it first as the mould spores will still be attached. Repeat the process until all visible mould spores are removed.

If you have stubborn mould that can't be fully removed using a cloth, try using some wire wool soaked in white vinegar mix and gently scrub the surface, then wipe down the area with a dry cloth once all mould spores have been removed.

3

If you are cleaning mould that has formed on top of wallpaper, we would suggest stripping the wallpaper first to make sure there are no spores hidden behind.



Painting & Decorating

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white t-shirt and safety glasses, is painting a wall. She is holding a long-handled brush with a yellow handle and a purple and white striped head. The background is a light-colored wall.

Once you have removed the mould spores there may be some stains left behind and a fresh coat of paint will help freshen up the area.

Before painting make sure all the mould spores have been removed as simply painting over mould will not stop it from returning.

We suggest using a matt emulsion when decorating as it will allow the walls to breathe.

Using thick paints such as vinyl or silk can cause moisture to become trapped between the wall & the paint.





Gravesham
Borough Council

