

BELVOIR!

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Condensation

Condensation is by far the most common cause of what many Tenants believe to be damp. Even though you can't see it, the air in and around your home contains water vapour and moisture. When this air comes into contact with a colder surface, the water vapour turns into droplets of water which is condensation. These water drops then may soak into wallpaper, paintwork or even plasterwork in time. If left, these areas then can get black mould growing on the surface.

Condensation can build up on almost any cold surface however it is most common on:

- the inside of windows
- external walls (especially north facing)
- in the corners of rooms
- in or behind cupboards or wardrobes

When the weather is warm, condensation is less of a problem because we are more likely to have our doors and windows open, which allows excess moisture to escape. But when the weather gets colder, we tend to keep our windows and doors closed to keep the heat inside and this is when it becomes worse. Most homes will be affected by condensation at some time, cooking, bathing and even breathing produce water vapour, however it can often be due to the occupants habits or lifestyle that worsens the problem. There are simple steps you can take to reduce the amount of moisture you produce such as:

- When cooking, don't boil kettles or pans for longer than necessary and put lids onto saucepans.
- Open windows or use an extractor fan. Leave the window open or the fan on for 15 minutes after you've finished cooking and bathing etc.
- Wipe away condensation that forms to prevent the growth of mould.
- Avoid drying clothes indoors. If this is not possible then dry washing in the bathroom. Ventilate the room by leaving a window open and keep the door closed to prevent moisture escaping into the rest of the house.
- Vent tumble dries **outside** or buy a condensing type drier.

Improve the ventilation in your home.

- Don't overfill cupboards/ wardrobes, and don't push furniture right up against the wall, leave enough room for air to circulate.
- Make sure that you **DON'T** block or cover any air vents or air bricks.
- Open a window or use an extractor fan when cooking or taking a bath.
- Open the internal doors of your home to allow dry air to circulate (but remember to shut kitchen and bathroom doors when cooking or bathing).
- Keep a small window open slightly in the rooms that you're using. If your windows are fitted with trickle vents, check these are open.
- Open bedroom windows for up to 1 hour when you wake up.

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Keep your home well heated.

- In cold weather, set your thermostat to provide a low background heat throughout the day, even if you're not at home. This will warm up the whole building, not just the air inside the rooms. It means there will be less chance of warm, wet air coming into contact with cold walls and surfaces and causing condensation.

Dealing with Mould

Mould appears as black speckles that cluster in damp patches on ceilings, walls, furniture, carpets, clothes and soft furnishings. The mould and its spores carry the musty smell often associated with a damp house.

- Carefully remove excess mould with a damp cloth and throw it away. Do not brush mould as it can release spores into the air.
- Wearing rubber gloves, wipe down and spray affected areas with a fungicidal wash or mould treatment spray, these are available in most supermarkets, discount shops and DIY stores.
- After treatment, you may need to redecorate using a fungicidal, mould-resistant paint, or if wallpapering use a paste that contains a fungicide.
- If mould has spread to your carpets, these should be shampooed. Do not try to remove it using a vacuum cleaner.
- If your clothes have been affected, these will need to be dry cleaned.

Remember: Dealing with condensation isn't straightforward and you will need to carry out as many of the above steps as possible every day, not just once or twice.