

Tenants can complain of damp problems in a rental property. Often, if the property has adequate heating, ventilation and damp proofing the problem can be one of condensation. This article gives some helpful tips in order to stop condensation and mould formation.

Condensation in dwelling houses is mainly a winter problem particularly where warm moist air is generated in living areas and then penetrates to colder parts of the building. Condensation is often caused by the lifestyle of the occupant; for example, the average occupant will produce condensation through cooking, washing and internal drying. Many young professionals do not adequately ventilate their property because they are often out during the day and when they return it is cold and they do not want to open windows to ventilate the property – the result being that there is no ventilation of the property during day or evening. The presence of water condensed on walls, ceilings and other cold surfaces can support mould growth which is a serious problem for both Landlord and tenant.

The longer surfaces are under conditions of high moisture or local high humidity the greater the probability of mould growth developing. Mould can be removed by washing the surface with a disinfectant or a fungicidal wash which must be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. However, this is only a temporary measure and the Tenant must deal with the source of the condensation to stop the mould reappearing.

It is unlikely that rented accommodation can be completely condensation free, even a new build. However, mould growth and condensation can be prevented by a combination of adequate ventilation, adequate heating and a reduction in humidity. Below we have detailed steps which Tenants can take to minimise the creation of condensation and mould growth, and reduce any potential impact on the property.

- Dry all windows, window sills, and any other surfaces that have become wet from condensation forming.
- Pull furniture, such as wardrobes away from walls, and keep tops of wardrobes clear to allow air to circulate.
- Try to keep the interior temperature of the property at a fairly constant level.
- If possible, always hang your washing outside. If this is not possible, you could hang it in the bathroom, with the door closed, and window slightly open for ventilation. NEVER dry washing on radiators as this will add to the moisture already in the air.

- If you use a tumble dryer, ensure it is vented to the outside, or that it is a condensing type.
- Close doors when your kitchen is in use, keep lids on saucepans when cooking, and try to ventilate either by opening a window slightly, or using the extractor fan. Ventilate the kitchen for about 20 minutes after use.
- Keep bathroom doors closed when bathing, and open windows slightly afterwards. Ventilate the bathroom for about 20 minutes after use.
- If your property is prone to condensation then consider using a dehumidifier unit which will remove excess moisture from the air. By removing excess moisture your property will also benefit from feeling warmer. Dehumidifiers come in a range of sizes and cost very little to run and draw out the excess moisture from the air helping to keep the condensation under control. You can also dry your laundry using a dehumidifier.
- If your windows have trickle vents try to keep them open.

If after taking the steps above, the condensation does not reduce, undertake the checks below and report anything to your lettings agent or your Landlord:

- Check all accessible plumbing for leaks.
- Check guttering and down pipes for cracks and blockages (for example, leaves).
- Check overflows and waste pipes under sinks for leaks.
- Check possible roof leaks.
- Check damaged outside walls or eroded pointing.
- Check for a high garden or path levels overlapping the damp proof course.
- Check all extractor fans are working efficiently.