

Condensation, damp and mould

How you can reduce
condensation, damp and
mould in your home

As a tenant, it is your responsibility to deal with condensation and mould in your home. Here are some handy tips on how best to manage these.

What is condensation?

Condensation occurs when warm moist air hits a cold surface.

Unless the moist air can escape through an open window, air vent or extractor fan, it will stay in your home until it finds a cold spot where it can condense.

If the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water appear.

Condensation mainly occurs during cold weather. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air and often leads to mould forming in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards.

Condensation is not the only cause of damp that can affect buildings. It can also come from:

Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows – water soaking the external of the building.

Rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing, spilling from a blocked gutter, through window frames or leaking through a cracked pipe.

Rising damp due to a defective damp course. This is rare and usually only occurs on ground/basement level rooms.

How to avoid condensation

1. Heat your home effectively

If you have a central heating system in your home, **leave the heating on a low setting** or set the timer switch to turn the heating on in the morning and afternoon/evening for at least seven hours each day. Let the system's thermostat turn the heating on/off automatically.

Other forms of heating such as storage heaters will need to be manually operated and it is advised that these be left on low to moderate settings for long periods of the day.

Try to avoid having cold areas in your home, by ensuring that the whole of your property is heated to a moderate temperature.

2. Reduce moisture

Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly. Make sure you try:

- **Cover cooking pots/pans** and do not leave kettles boiling on the hob

- **Dry washing outdoors** on a line, or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on. Do not dry washing on radiators.

- **Tumble dryers** remove moisture from wet clothing and must be vented to the outside. Check the operating manual for advice on how to vent it. If your tumble dryer is part of the washing machine it will be vented automatically. **Do not vent directly through the structure of the building** as alterations to the structure, without permission are against conditions of your tenancy.

- **Wipe condensation on windows** to prevent it from running on to the walls below and spoiling your decorations. Likewise, also wipe dry surfaces where moisture forms to prevent mould from occurring.

- **Run cold water in the bath before adding hot water** as this reduces the risk of steam being created.

- If you have a **combination boiler, adjust the thermostat to get the hot water to a useable temperature** without the need to add cold water.

- **Do not use paraffin and portable flueless bottled gas heaters** as these heaters put a lot of moisture into the air and are against the conditions of your tenancy.

- **Avoid reheating boiling water/kettles.** The steam has water vapour which can cause condensation.

3. Ventilate your home

- **Keep a small window ajar or a trickle ventilator open** when someone is in the room.

- **Make use of extractor fans.** If they are not working, please contact the council.

- **Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use.** Leave windows open for half an hour after bathing or cooking to get rid of the moisture.

- **Never block ventilators**, i.e. vents to windows, airbricks to walls and chimney breasts.

- **Close the kitchen and bathroom doors** when these rooms are in use, even if your kitchen or bathroom has an extractor fan. This will help prevent moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms, which are often colder and more likely to suffer with condensation. Likewise, keep bedroom doors closed to reduce the risk of moisture travelling to these rooms.

- **Do not draught proof kitchens, bathrooms** or rooms where there is condensation or mould or where there is a cooker or a gas fire (fuel burning heater).

- Where possible, **position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls** and avoid placing furniture or heavy curtains in front of radiators.

Take action against mould

- **Remove mould growth** by wiping down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash, which carries a Health & Safety Executive 'approval number'. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely.
- **Dry clean mildewed clothes** and shampoo carpets
- **Do not brush or vacuum mould** as this can increase the risk of respiratory problems
- After treatment, **redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint** to help prevent mould recurring. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper.

The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould is to eliminate condensation and dampness.

Remember to:

- Adjust your heating to keep all rooms and walls warm
- Reduce air moisture wherever possible
- Ventilate your home as much as possible
- Clean away any signs of mould as soon as it appears

Contact us

If you have tried all of the methods in this leaflet, and after three months you still have condensation and mould please call the customer service centre on 0800 952 4444, email repairs@southwark.gov.uk, or visit www.southwark.gov.uk/repairs

Report repairs 24/7

We all know how inconvenient it is when things go wrong at home, that's why our **repairs service is open 24/7**.

You don't have to wait until normal office hours to report a repair, you can **call us on 0800 952 4444** or if you have a mobile phone with free minutes, it may be cheaper for you to **call 020 7525 2600**.

You can also **report your repair online**, at www.southwark.gov.uk/reportit, and use diagrams to accurately diagnose the right repair. You can also report your repair via email, just email us at repairs@southwark.gov.uk

Our appointment times are flexible, we offer many evening and weekend appointments for heating, hot water and maintenance work - all you need to do is ask if it is possible to have an evening or weekend appointment when you report the repair and we will try and find the most convenient time for you.

Repair emergencies

For emergency repairs our contractor will attend within 24 hours. Generally a repair is categorised as emergency if it:

- Poses a serious risk to health and safety
- Poses a serious risk to the structure of the property
- Results in the property being insecure

For all repair emergencies, call the 24-hour freephone number **0800 952 4444** or email the housing repairs call centre repairs@southwark.gov.uk. Or visit www.southwark.gov.uk/repairs for more information.