

Tackling condensation, damp and mould

Your introductory guide



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Types of damp



Condensation

The most common reason houses get damp is because of moisture inside. When warm, wet air touches cooler places like windows or walls, it turns into tiny water drops. You might see these drops on window frames, in room corners, and behind furniture.



Rising damp

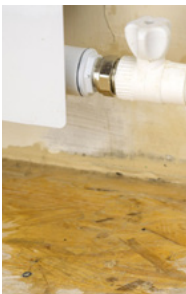
Rising damp occurs when moisture from the ground rises up through walls or floors. This is common in older buildings lacking effective special barriers called a damp-proof courses (DPCs) or when the DPC is compromised. Signs include peeling plaster and "tide marks" on walls up to about waist high.



Penetrating damp

This kind of damp happens when water gets into the house from outside. It usually happens because there are problems with the building, like cracks in the walls, roof, or around windows. Rain can come in through these cracks.

Signs to look for are water stains, bubbling plaster, peeling paint, and mould growing on the walls.

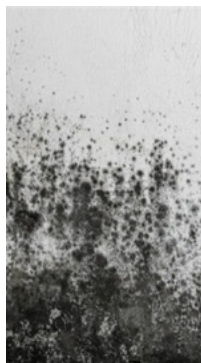


Traumatic damp

Traumatic damp happens when water leaks inside the house. This can be from broken pipes, leaking radiators, or if someone lets the sink or bathtub overflow. Water might also come in from outside, like from a leak in a neighbour's building or during a flood.

Health risks

If you have damp or mould, you're not alone—damp and mould can affect people's health in all types of accommodation.



Mould

Mould is a kind of fungus that likes to grow in damp places. It can damage things like walls and furniture, and it might make people sick if we don't fix it. Even if you can't see mould, just having dampness can be bad. Damp places help mould, dust mites, bacteria, and viruses grow. The longer the damp and mould stay, the more it can hurt our health.



House dust mites

Dust mites are tiny creatures that are too small to see. They like to live in warm, humid places and eat the tiny flakes of skin that people and pets shed. Just having dust mites isn't always bad, but their droppings and dead bodies can make some people sick, especially if they have allergies or asthma.

Health effects

Damp and mould can make us sick, and can cause coughing, wheezing, and make it hard to breathe. In really bad cases, they can cause lung infections or make asthma worse.

Damp and mould can also make our eyes itchy, give us skin problems like eczema, and cause fungal infections—especially in people who are already sick. Living in a damp and mouldy home can also make people feel sad or worried because their house is damaged and uncomfortable.

People most at risk

Some people can get sick more easily from damp and mould than others. These include children, elderly people, pregnant women, people who are already sick, and those whose bodies can't fight germs well. It's very important to fix damp and mould problems right away, especially for these people. We shouldn't wait until someone gets sick before we do something about it.

Condensation and mould

Condensation can make mould grow in your home. Mould can stain and damage wallpaper, walls, window frames, furniture, and clothes. Mould and its tiny seeds, called spores, cause the musty smell you notice in damp places. Black Mould is a clear sign of condensation. Water that has come in through masonry will contain salts which inhibit black mould.



Causes of condensation

Condensation forms when too much moisture builds up inside your home. Things like cooking, showering, and drying clothes indoors add water to the air. If there's not enough fresh air to dilute it, the internal humidity rises. Where the air touches cold surfaces, like windows or walls, and turns into water droplets, that's condensation.



Moisture production

A family of four people adds about 10-14 litres of water to the air inside their home every day—that's about 20 pints - just by doing normal things.

Cooking: around 1 to 2 litres per day

Bathing/Showering: about 1 to 2 litres per person

Drying Clothes Indoors: around 5 litres per load

Breathing: each person breathes out about 0.02L every hour, even when sleeping. All this water in the air can make the house damp. If there's not enough fresh air or heat to manage it, this can lead to condensation and mould.

6 STEPS to prevent mould

STEP 1 ▢

Treat and remove mould if you can

- Clean mould on walls, ceilings and window frames with a fungicidal wash that has a Health & Safety Executive (HSE) approved number. Follow the instructions on the product label carefully.
- Do not use bleach to clean up mould.
- When cleaning, wear gloves, a mask, and safety goggles. Make sure windows are open for fresh air.
- If things like carpets or curtains have mould, they might need to be thrown away because mould is hard to remove from them.
- Mould behind wallpaper needs to be removed. Ensure the cause has been fixed before any re-papering.
- Do not paint over mould as it doesn't fix the problem. The mould will still be there and can grow back.

STEP 2 ▢

Reduce moisture production

- Wipe away water you see on surfaces.
- Keep lids on pots when cooking. Keep the exhaust/extractor fan running.

- Keeps doors closed when cooking, bathing, washing and drying clothes.
- Dry clothes outside whenever you can.
- Take shorter, cooler showers to make less steam.
- When filling a bathtub, put cold water in first to reduce steam.
- After using the shower or bath, wipe down the walls to remove water.
- Leave the washing machine door open when not in use so it can dry inside.
- Make sure tumble dryers send air outside.

STEP 3 ▣ **Ventilate your home**

- Keep trickle vents open and use extractor fans if you have them.
- After a shower or bath, keep the fan running for at least 20 minutes.
- If you need to dry clothes inside, do it in a small room with the door closed and a window open or a fan on.
- Open the windows and internal doors every day for at least 5 minutes to let fresh air circulate.
- Don't leave windows slightly open for long times; instead, open them wider for a short time.
- Make sure air can move around furniture and inside closets.
- Don't push furniture right up against the walls and keep closets tidy.

STEP 4 ▢

Keep your home warm

- When it's cold and wet outside, try to keep your home warm between 18°C and 21°C.
- It's better to keep the heat steady all day than to turn it on high for a short time.
- The most important time to maintain temperatures is at night.
- Don't wait for it to get really cold to turn on the heating.
- Keep the temperature the same; turning the heat on and off isn't the best way to stop mould.
- Bleed radiators if the tops of them feel cold.
- Make sure pipes are covered with insulation to keep them warm.
- Stop cold air from coming in by blocking gaps. This can help prevent condensation and save money on heating bills.

STEP 5 ▢

Report damp and mould

- If you see damp or mould, tell your landlord or letting agent in writing by letter or E-Mail so they know about the problem.
- Ask your landlord about making the home more energy-efficient, like adding better insulation or ventilation, to help prevent damp and mould.
- If you have taken action yourself and written to your landlord but have not received an adequate response, or you feel the repairs have not helped the issue, you can reach out to our team of specialist officers for further help and advice.

STEP 6 ▢

Seek advice and support

If you're worried about heating costs, look into getting financial help, like government grants, to make it easier to pay for heating.

For advice and support with heating, tenant and landlord rights, please visit the webpages below;

swale.gov.uk/housing-council-tax-and-benefits/housing

cee.swale.gov.uk/what-you-can-do/fuel-and-water

nea.org.uk/get-help

citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/repairs-in-rented-housing

england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice

Further Information



Full information can be found at
swale.gov.uk/damp-and-mould
or scan the QR code.

Private Sector Housing, Swale Borough Council

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Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT

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Tel: 01795 417850

Email: housing@swale.gov.uk