

Swindon Safe & Warm

Helping you to keep your home free from **damp, condensation and mould**



Swindon
Safe & Warm



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Safe & Warm is a Swindon Borough Council led initiative which aims to make homes warmer and cheaper to heat and reduce the risk to people from falls and fires in the home.

The purpose of this booklet is to help you to keep your home free from damp, condensation and mould. Damp housing encourages the growth of mould and mites which can increase the risk of respiratory illness, so there are health implications to damp and mould problems as well as it being unsightly. Condensation is probably the biggest cause of damp in homes, so this booklet focuses on ways to identify and reduce condensation as well as treating the mould growth often associated with it.

Special thanks go to Stoke-on-Trent City Council for information provided in this booklet.

For further information on the Safe & Warm programme, please contact:

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Types of dampness

There are three main reasons for dampness in your home. It is important to understand the difference between them so that you can effectively treat the problem.

- **Rising damp** – caused by water rising from the ground into the home through a defective or missing damp proof course. It usually leaves a tidemark on the wall, and typically rises up to around 50cm.
- **Penetrating dampness** – appears due to a defect outside the home such as missing roof tiles, missing pointing or cracked rendering, blocked gutters or cracked pipes. It can also be caused by defective plumbing such as leaking pipes, wastes or overflows. It usually results in a well-defined damp patch and is more noticeable after a period of rainfall.
- **Condensation** – caused by excessive moisture that cannot escape from the building.

Rising damp and penetrating damp rarely result in black mould growth. Condensation, if left untreated can result in black mould growth.



Condensation and mould growth


This is by far the most common cause of dampness experienced in homes. Condensation is caused by water vapour or moisture from inside the dwelling coming into contact with a colder surface, such as a window or wall. The resultant water drops (condensation) may then soak into the wallpaper or paintwork or even plasterwork. In time, the affected damp areas then attract black mould that grows on its surface.

Condensation mainly occurs during the colder months, whether it is rainy or dry outside. It is usually found in the corners of rooms, north facing walls and on or near windows. It is also found in areas of little air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls.

Black mould is frequently seen on this type of dampness.

Most homes will be affected by condensation at some point. However, certain activities can increase the problem. Whether you are an owner occupier or a rent-paying tenant, condensation and mould growth is often due to habits and lifestyle and is something that can be reduced or remedied by the occupant.

Cooking, washing, drying clothes indoors, even breathing - all produce water vapour that can only be seen when tiny drops of water (condensation) appear on colder surfaces such as walls, windows, ceilings or mirrors.



The 'amount' of condensation in a home depends upon three factors:

1. How much water vapour is produced by the actions of its residents
2. How cold or warm the property is
3. How much air circulation (ventilation) there is

Simply turning up the heating will not sort out the problem; this may only temporarily reduce condensation. All three factors may need to be looked at to reduce the problem.

The first sign of a problem is water vapour condensing on windows and other cold surfaces, which then takes a long time to disappear, allowing surfaces to become damp. The second indication is black mould patches growing on these damp areas.

Black Mould

Mould spores are invisible to the human eye and are always present in the atmosphere both inside and outside dwellings. They only become noticeable when they land on a surface upon which they can grow and then multiply. By dealing with the causes of condensation you will automatically deal with the problem of mould.

Ways to reduce condensation and mould growth

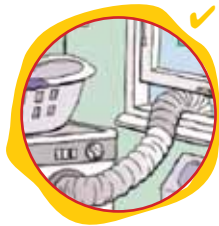
A six-step plan can help to reduce the amount of condensation and thus black mould growth in your home.

1. Produce less moisture

Our everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes, on average 20 pints a day. For example, drying clothes could add 9 pints of water to the air in your home in a day, cooking and using the kettle a further 6 pints, and having a bath or shower another 2 pints. To reduce this:



a) Dry clothes outdoors. Avoid drying clothes indoors or if you have to, dry them on a clothes airer in the bathroom with the door closed and either an extractor fan on or a window slightly open.



b) Vent tumble driers to the outside (never into the home) or buy a condensing type.



c) Cover pans when cooking and do not leave kettles boiling.



d) Do not use paraffin or liquid petroleum (bottled) gas heaters. They produce large amounts of water vapour and are very expensive to run!



2. Remove excess moisture

Always wipe the windows and window sills of your home every morning to remove condensation. This is especially important in the bedroom, bathroom and kitchen - just opening the window is not enough.

3. Ventilate to remove moisture

It is important to remove condensation and excess moisture by ventilating rooms. You can ventilate a room without making draughts or causing it to become cold.



To do this, you may only need to open the window slightly or use the trickle vent that can often be found on new UPVC windows. This allows warm (but moist) air to escape to the outside and let in cool (but dry) air.



- a) Always ventilate or open a window when using the kitchen or the bathroom and close the doors to prevent moisture in the air from spreading to other parts of the house. Continue to ventilate these rooms for a short time after a shower, a bath or cooking, and keep the door closed!
- b) Open bedroom windows for up to one hour as soon as you arise and throw back the sheets or duvets to air the bed and bedding.
- c) Leave space between the back of furniture and cold walls.
- d) Ventilate cupboards, wardrobes and avoid overfilling them as this prevents air circulating.
- e) Do not completely block chimneys and flues – fit with an air vent and make sure you meet ventilation requirements for any gas appliances in a room.

4. Heat your home a little more

In cold weather, the best way to keep rooms warm and avoid condensation is to keep low background heat on all day rather than short bursts of high heat when you are in the house. Unheated rooms may be particularly prone to condensation problems.

Good heating controls on your radiators, room thermostats and a timer will help control the heating throughout your house and manage costs.

5. Insulate and draught-proof

Insulation in the loft (to a depth of 11 inches or 270 mm), cavity wall insulation and draught-proofing of windows and outside doors will help to keep your home warm and you will have lower bills as well. It may also be possible to insulate the walls of homes with solid walls. When the home is warmer, condensation is less likely.

When draught-proofing do not block permanent ventilators and do not draught-proof rooms requiring ventilation for fuel burning heaters or a cooker. It is also advisable not to draught-proof in a room where there is already condensation or mould.

Find out if there are any initiatives to get insulation measures into your home by looking at the Useful Contacts page in the back of this booklet.

6. Dealing with black mould

Black mould can grow on walls, ceilings, furnishings and even on clothes and toys, which can be depressing and expensive.

To kill and remove the mould:

- a) Carefully remove excess mould with a damp cloth and throw away after. Do not brush mould as this releases spores into the air.

- b) Wipe down affected areas using a fungicidal wash or diluted bleach – remember always use rubber gloves and wear safety glasses.
- c) Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.
- d) After treatment redecorate using a fungicidal paint or wall paper paste – do not paint over using an ordinary paint

Remember - Dealing with condensation is not easy. Only carrying out one or two of the above steps may not solve your problem. You need to do as many as possible every day, so that it becomes part of your habits and lifestyle.

Warmth versus Ventilation

Striking the right balance between warmth and ventilation is important and can be very effective.

By opening windows or ventilating your home it may appear that you are losing some heat, but what you are actually doing is allowing warm moisture-laden air to escape and permitting cool dry air to enter your home. Dry cool air is actually cheaper to heat than warm moist air!

Many people who have double-glazing installed experience problems with condensation and mould growth that they never had with their old draughty window frames. This is because all the natural draughts around the poorly fitted windows have been sealed. However, by using trickle vents or opening windows slightly, then the necessary ventilation can be achieved.

Remember - The advice is to ventilate for an appropriate period of time, not to leave the windows open all day.

Useful contacts

Safe & Warm programme

For further information on the Safe & Warm programme, including options for help with home insulation or heating problems for those who own their own homes or rent from a private landlord, please contact:

David Miles
Affordable Warmth Coordinator
Swindon Borough Council
Tel: 01793 463679
Email: dmiles3@swindon.gov.uk

Swindon Borough Council tenants

If you rent your home from Swindon Borough Council and require any repairs, home insulation, or have any heating problems please contact:

Housing Helpline
Tel: 01793 445503
Email: customerservices@swindon.gov.uk

If you rent your home from a Housing Association or other social landlord, please contact them regarding repairs, home insulation or heating problems.

Useful contacts

Rental properties with damp problems

If you are a tenant, and your landlord refuses to take (or allow) reasonable steps to deal with dampness, the Council may be able to help you. For further advice please contact:

Residential Services Team

Tel: 01793 445500

Email: residentialservices@swindon.gov.uk

Information for landlords


If you are a landlord, please remember that your accommodation should be kept free from damp and mould. It must have:

- An efficient heating system and adequate insulation
- Sufficient and appropriate opening windows and mechanical ventilation (as required) and
- Systems to ensure the property is properly maintained.

More information on this is available from the Residential Services Team
Residential Services Team

Tel: 01793 445500

Email: residentialservices@swindon.gov.uk



This information about '**Helping you to keep your home free from damp, condensation and mould**' is available on the internet at www.swindon.gov.uk. It can be produced in a range of languages and formats (such as large print, Braille or other accessible formats) by contacting the Customer Services Department. Tel: 01793 445500, Fax: 01793 463331 or E-mail: customerservices@swindon.gov.uk