

 <b>West Lothian Council</b>	<b>Environmental Health</b>		<b>SUBJECT:</b> Controlling Condensation and Mould Growth in Your Home
		Food Safety/Food Hygiene	<b>NUMBER:</b> PH01
<b>REVISED:</b> 26/01/26		Health & Safety	
	✓	Public Health	<b>KEYWORDS:</b> CONDENSATION AND MOULD GROWTH
<b>STATUS:</b> PUBLIC <b>ADVICE</b>		Pollution Control	
		Pest Control/Dog Warden	

## Information Sheet PH01

### Controlling Condensation Dampness and Mould Growth in Your Home

Condensation is something which will have an impact on most homes if not managed and controlled. Please read this Guidance Note. It will help you understand how this might be happening, and what can be done about it.

#### What is causing the condensation?

Condensation occurs when moist air comes into contact with a cool surface, and water droplets form. This is the same effect as when you breathe on a mirror.

When this happens on a window, the glass mists up and drops of water will soon trickle down. When it happens on a wall, the wall soaks up the moisture and become damp.

Mould then tends to grow on the damp areas.

#### Where does the moist air come from?

It can come from a number of sources.

We all give off water from our bodies all the time, when we breathe and from our skin. We also put lots of water into the air when we use a tumble drier, when we dry clothes indoors, take a bath or shower, and even when we cook, or wash the dishes. Bottled gas heaters and paraffin heaters particularly produce large amounts of water vapour.

The moist air can travel through our homes, and will cause condensation if it comes into contact with a cool surface like a window or an outside wall.

#### Why is it only in certain areas?

Condensation happens most on cool parts of walls, and where there is not much air movement, so it tends to be on outer walls, which are cooler. It often shows as a dark patch on the ceiling, and/or on walls, and especially in corners where air circulation is poor. The sidewalls of windows are often affected, as they can be even colder.

Any areas which have poor ventilation can be very prone to condensation. This might be behind and inside cupboards, dressers and wardrobes, or behind the bed if this is against an outside wall.

It can happen in any room, but tends to be more of a problem in bedrooms and hallways, as these are cooler. Bathrooms and shower rooms generally have the most condensation – especially on tiles. But if the walls/tiles are wiped dry, and the bathroom is ventilated, then this will help reduce mould forming in that area.

### **Why are patches of mould growing, and is it harmful?**

Mould spores (like seeds) float in the air around us all the time. They normally cause no harm to us because the concentration in the air is very low. If they land on a cool damp area of wall they will start to grow. After a while the mould becomes visible as a dark coloured patch. This is often black, but can be other colours.

At that stage the mould begins to release new spores into the air inside your house. These new spores can very quickly spread the mould to other areas of the house. If they get into clothes then you will notice a fusty smell.

Breathing mould spores can be harmful if someone is already struggling with a respiratory issue such as asthma. But overtime it can also lead to health problems for others depending on their vulnerabilities. It is therefore very important to deal with mouldy patches as soon as possible.

### **What can I do, and where do I start?**

Some simple steps can be taken to prevent rooms becoming damp and mouldy.

If you have mould growing, then deal with that first. It is usually quite easy to control or remove. Some surfaces will be easier to clean and manage than others. But the best thing to do is use an antifungal cleaning product or a product that's designed to kill mould. Use a disposable cloth and throw it away after use to avoid spreading the mould.

Never touch the mould directly. Remember to wear gloves and a mask when cleaning the mould. You should also wear any other personal protective equipment that the product's manufacturer recommends. This will be listed on the label.

You should only wipe mould when it's wet, not when it's dry. This helps avoid spreading the mould spores into the air.

Make sure the area you're cleaning is well ventilated by using extractor fans or opening windows. Keep doors to other rooms closed: this will help avoid spreading mould spores in the air to other parts of the house.

Doing this will help reduce spores being released into the air. You may have to keep doing this as part of your regular cleaning. However, you will need to be careful to not overclean as this may add more moisture to the surface allowing mould to form. You will also need to take extra care when using bleach, or mould removing chemicals. Follow the instructions for safe use to ensure you don't cause any harm to yourself or others in the home.

Cleaning will not necessarily provide a permanent fix. So, after dealing with any mould you need to deal with the condensation.

The traditional answer was to turn up the heating to dry up the damp, and open the windows to blow the moist air out. This can work – but it is an expensive use of heating and energy for many people, so nowadays, we suggest a range of measures which work together to cure the problem. We suggest starting with the cheapest and easiest solutions first.

- Think about where you produce moisture into the air, and try to reduce it. For example, if you use a tumble drier in the house, use a ducting kit to take the wet air outside, or a self-condensing attachment. Cook with lids on pans.
- Sometimes we can't help making lots of moisture in the air – cooking, taking a shower, airing clothes etc. The trick is to stop the water spreading to other parts of the house by shutting the door and opening the window in the room to let the wet air escape.
- If you have an extractor fan in a wet area, then use it.
- Damp and mould do not thrive in fresh air, so it is vital to keep rooms well aired. It is even more important than keeping it heated.
- If you have double-glazing, keep the air vent above the window open all the time – unless the wind is too strong and cold. Try to have the window open – just on the first notch will do – for an hour every morning when you get up. On fine days open the window more, if you can do so safely.
- Keep air moving by using a fan or electric blower for a short while each day. You do not have to have the heat on. Just blowing the air around will help a lot.
- Bedding, and clothing stored in drawers and wardrobes, can hold cold air and become fusty quite quickly. So, pull bedding right back every day to let fresh air get to it. Leave the wardrobe door open to let fresh air in. If a room is particularly damp, then you might want to keep clothes stored in a different room. Or you might take it out regularly to air thoroughly, at least until the dampness has improved.
- Any damp areas which are also poorly ventilated will tend to allow mould to grow. This often happens behind wardrobes and cupboards, and at the side of the bed. Try to have a gap behind and around furniture to allow air to circulate. Try not to put furniture against a cold outside wall.
- Try not to let the room get chilled. There is no need to keep the room particularly warm, but a little steady heat is better at keeping the damp at bay. If you can only have the heating on for short periods, then early evening and early morning are the best times.
- Cold walls can be improved by putting in more insulation. This might be as cavity wall insulation, or by dry-lining the walls, for example. Putting in double glazing, draught proofing outside doors and windows, installing extra heating, or moving radiators into damp areas can also work, but are expensive and only used as a last resort.

Start with the easiest and cheapest things at the top of the list first. If you can do most of these things, then the dampness and mould problem should improve quickly. If you find that you still have problems though, please do not hesitate to contact Environmental Health on 01506 280000 or **[Click on this link to find out how to contact Environmental Health](#)** for further advice.

### **More Information**

From **March 2026**, new regulations (Investigation and Commencement of Repair (Scotland) Regulations 2026) will require social and private landlords to investigate and repair damp and mould within defined, legally binding timescales.

More detailed information can be found in a Scottish Executive leaflet called “Keep your home free from damp and mould”, available on their web site at <https://www2.gov.scot/Publications/2005/05/10103020/30224>. In some cases, you may be able to get a grant towards the cost of some of the measures. Contact the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre for details on 0800 008 7766, or on [www.changeworks.org.uk](http://www.changeworks.org.uk)

