Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City & County Council

Controlling Condensation and Mould in Your Home

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WHY CONDENSATION HAPPENS

Condensation is one of the main causes of dampness and mould growth in dwellings. Condensation occurs on cold surfaces and places where there is little movement of air, such as on or near windows, in corners, and in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. Dampness caused by excessive condensation can lead to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes and other fabrics, and the rotting of wooden window frames.

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES AND CAUSES OF CONDENSATION IN HOUSEHOLDS?

There are 4 main factors that cause condensation:

1. Too much moisture being produced in your home
2. Not enough ventilation
3. Cold surfaces
4. Temperature of your home

Finding out the sources of condensation can help residents determine the steps that must be taken to counter its effects. Knowledge of each source can help in making informed decisions in how to deal with condensation.

1 Too Much Moisture

Showering and Bathing

The most humid place in the house is the bathroom. Especially during warmer months, or due to internal heating, showering can result in large amounts of water vapour to saturate the air and cause condensation. If not properly vented, this moisture can penetrate the bathroom walls or the rest of the house.

- After showering, open the window fully and keep the bathroom door closed for 15-20 minutes
- Ensure that any mechanical ventilation provided is powered on and in good working order
- Use a squeegee to remove moisture from shower doors, tray and surrounds

Cooking

Most food items have at least some water content. This moisture is released when food is heated during cooking. On top of this, the burning gas in stoves releases its own moisture, increasing the amount of moisture released when cooking. This makes the kitchen a major source of condensation problems in the house.

- Cook with pan lids on and turn the heat down once the water has boiled
- Use the cooker extractor fan when using the stove or cooker
- Keep windows slightly open when cooking or washing up as this will help to dispel moisture in the air

Laundry

If clothes are washed and left to dry in the house, especially during cold weather, humidity levels can increase dramatically. The water evaporates from the clothes and eventually saturates the air, causing condensation.

- Do not dry clothes on

radiators – this will create moisture in the room and result in higher heating bills
- Dry clothes externally as much as possible
- If using a tumble dryer, make sure that it is vented to the outside unless it's a condensing dryer

2 Ventilation

The easiest method to prevent condensation is by reducing the moisture content of room air by providing some ventilation. Ventilation allows air to circulate throughout the house which removes the stale moist air and replaces it with fresh air that contains less moisture.

Opening windows daily, especially when cooking and after bathing, will help to remove moist air and replace it with drier air from outside.

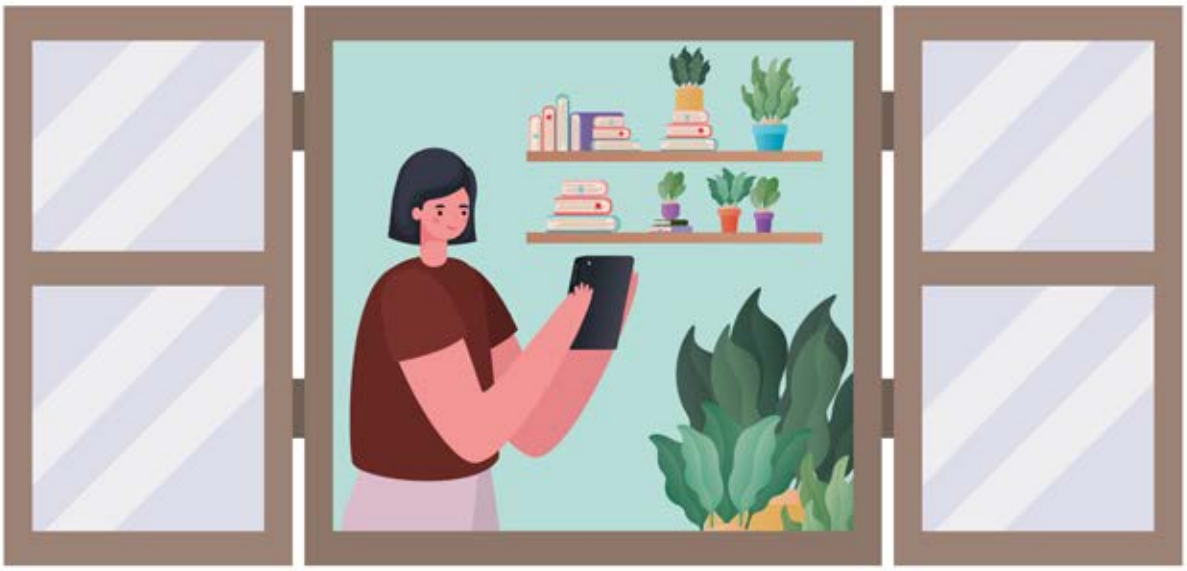
It is also very important to keep background vents open at all times.

- Ventilate your home for at least 30 minutes each day by opening windows and leaving trickle vents opens as much as possible
- Keep air vents clear and unblocked
- Use the mechanical extract ventilation in kitchens and bathrooms, where provided.
- Minimise moisture production within the dwelling
- Ensure that there is a small gap around furniture to allow air to circulate – this will reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items. Never overfill wardrobes and cupboards as it restricts air movement
- Take measures to prevent very moist air spreading to other rooms from the kitchen, bathroom, or from where clothes are dried, by opening windows in these rooms and keeping the doors shut

3 Cold Surfaces

Condensation forms more easily on cold surfaces in the home; for example on walls and ceilings. In many cases, those surfaces can be made warmer by improving the insulation.

- Dry excess moisture from windows and windowsills every morning, as well as surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom which have become wet
- Ensure that, where attic insulation is provided, it is extended to the eaves of the roof (while ensuring that attic ventilation is not blocked)



4 The Temperature of your home

It is imperative that some level of heating is provided in your home to prevent mould and condensation growth. Keeping the temperature in your home on medium-to-low level of heat throughout the day will help to control condensation, especially in cold weather.

TREATING MOULD GROWTH

To kill and remove mould, wipe down or spray walls and windows frames with a fungicidal wash and ensure that you follow the instructions for it's safe use. Dry clean mildewed clothes, and shampoo carpets – do not try to remove mould by using a brush or a vacuum cleaner. After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint and/or a fungicidal resistant wall paper paste to help prevent mould recurring. The effect of fungicidal or anti-condensation paint is destroyed if covered with ordinary paint or wallpaper.

SAFETY

You should not change the ventilation of a room that has a gas or solid fuel appliance connected to the chimney. This is because there may be a risk of drawing toxic fumes back from the appliance into the room.
If condensation occurs in a room where you have a heater connected to the chimney you should have the installation checked, as the chimney may have become blocked.

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