

# Condensation



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL





# Condensation

## What is it?

Condensation is when excess moisture in the air changes to a liquid.

## Where does it occur?

Condensation can occur in kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms and, in fact, in any room where there is excess moisture combined with cold surfaces and little ventilation.

Typically, it is found in places where there is little air movement, such as:

- in corners
- behind large pieces of furniture
- on soft furnishings
- in and behind wardrobes
- around windows
- on external walls
- on mirrors in bathrooms

*A mirror steams up when you bathe*

## How can I reduce it?

**Reduce steam and moisture.** Every day, the average UK household puts about 12 litres (about 20

pints) of moisture into the air in their home. In homes where clothes are dried indoors the total moisture can be over 20 litres (36 pints) a day. The main daily activities which produce a lot of water very quickly are cooking, washing and drying clothes, and having baths and showers.

**Cooking.** Reduce the amount of moisture given off by covering pans and do not leave kettles boiling.

**Washing and drying clothes.** Dry washing outside if possible. If drying washing indoors is unavoidable, then dry it in a heated and well-ventilated room, such as a bathroom.

**Wipe down windows and sills.** If condensation appears on them, wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator or in front of a heater.

**Baths and showers.** Keep the bathroom warm and well ventilated.

**Don't use bottled gas heaters.** South Kesteven District Council does not permit the use of bottled gas or paraffin heaters in our homes.



## What do I need to do to improve ventilation?

**In occupied rooms.** Some ventilation is needed all of the time to get rid of the moisture being produced, including that produced by breathing. Keep a small window or a trickle vent open. A trickle vent is a small background ventilator which is usually controllable i.e. open or shut. This vent is usually situated within the window frame. The vent is not designed to combat condensation alone but will help circulate air when used with other vents or systems.

In some buildings bathrooms or toilets do not have windows. However, ventilation will be provided usually by mechanical means, but if the installed ventilation fans have for any reason failed, it must be reported through to Customer Services for an appointment to be made for a repair. It is important that all ventilation systems are used properly. They should not be obstructed or disabled. If they do not operate or they operate incorrectly you must tell us so that repairs can be carried out. Other rooms such as storage rooms may also be without windows or ventilators. These should only be used for storage. If condensation does occur, it should be wiped away immediately and the door kept closed to prevent moisture entering.

**Kitchens and bathrooms** need more ventilation when you cook, wash up, bathe or dry clothes. You will need to open windows wider or use extractor

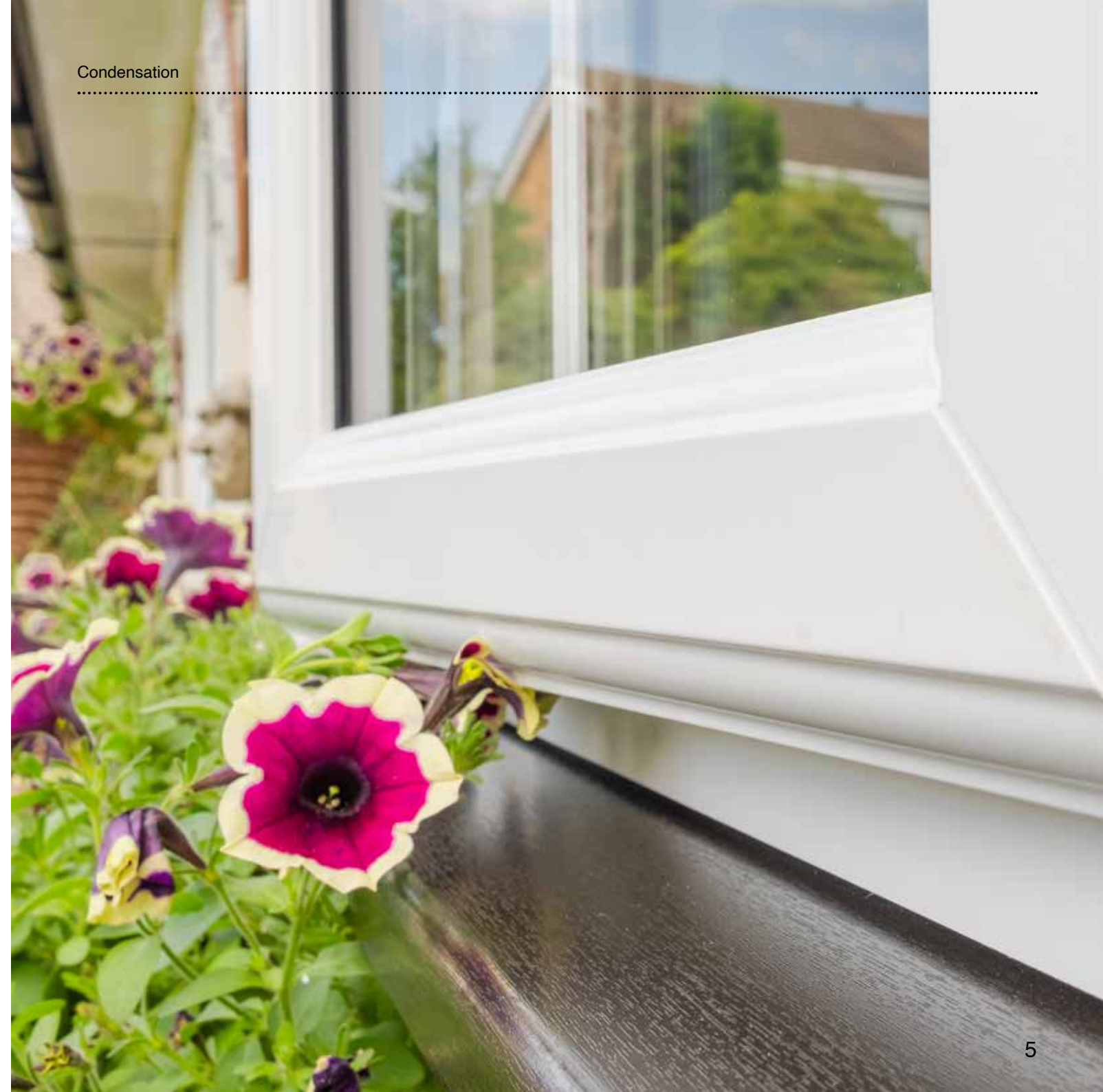
fans, if fitted. Humidistat controlled fans are particularly useful because they operate automatically when the air is humid and are relatively cheap to run.

**If you use a tumble dryer** then make sure it is ventilated directly outside. Venting kits are available for many popular brands of dryer. Avoid tumble dryers that vent directly into the room.

**Close kitchen and bathroom doors** whilst these rooms are in use and for a while afterwards to allow the moisture to be vented to the outside. This will help to reduce condensation in other parts of your home.

**Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes:** Do not overfill them as overfilling reduces air circulation. Cut slots into backs of shelves or use slatted shelves. If you can't do this yourself ask someone to do it for you. Leave enough space to allow air circulation between the backs of large furniture, beds and walls. Avoid locating wardrobes, beds and large furniture against external walls.

**Do not cover airbricks or other permanent ventilators.** These are often carefully placed to ventilate vulnerable areas and gas appliances. Covering these can cause the gas appliance to give off carbon monoxide, which is toxic and can kill.



## Heating your home

The best way to keep rooms warm enough to cut down on condensation is to keep low background heat on all day, even if you are out. The recommended temperature is 15 degrees centigrade but keep a check on the meters to see how much it is costing you. This will allow the structure of the building to warm up as well as the air. Short bursts of heat will only warm up the air, leaving surfaces cold. This method of heating is particularly important in homes where all of the rooms are on one level and do not benefit from heated rooms below. De-humidifiers can help to reduce condensation, but these are most effective in heated rooms.

If low background heat cannot be maintained, all day condensation may occur on surfaces that are cold as soon as warm moist air comes into contact with them. To reduce the possibility of condensation, adequate ventilation must be provided to allow moisture to be ventilated out of the building. Any condensation forming on cold surfaces must be wiped away and the surfaces dried. Every home is different in terms of heating costs. It is up to the tenant to establish if it is more cost effective to have low background heat on all day or use the heating when needed.





## Other things you can do to help cut down on condensation

Place condensation traps or sponge strips to windows to collect the condensation. These inexpensive items can be purchased from most DIY shops. Care must be taken to fit these properly.

Lofts within homes should be well insulated. During cold weather lofts are very cold. If warm moist air from the home enters the loft this may condense on the underside of the roof forming water droplets,

so it is therefore very important to ensure the loft hatch is fitted properly. Also, if the loft insulation has been disturbed or removed, this should be replaced immediately. All concerns regarding lofts should be reported to South Kesteven District Council.



## If I already have mould in my home how do I get rid of it?

Mould is a fungus and grows where moist conditions exist. The spores of the mould are everywhere and are usually dormant and harmless. However, given the right conditions the spores will germinate causing black mould. The mould spreads spores into the air, usually giving off a musty smell. Clothes, furniture and carpets can all be affected, and it can aggravate asthma and other respiratory diseases. The mould spores can also affect food, which can in turn produce toxins. Mould spores have the potential to be harmful to both adults and children. Generally, people wash down the affected areas with a bleach solution. This can cause the mould growth to return at a more aggressive rate, however. The best solution to use is a "Milton" based steriliser solution which actively attacks the mould spores and prevents a regrowth, helped by attention to property conditions.

**Walls and ceilings.** Wash down mould-affected walls, ceilings and paintwork with a fungicidal wash that carries a Health & Safety Executive approval number. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully. You may need to strip wall and ceiling paper from the mould-affected areas. Re-decorate with a good quality fungicidal paint. Please note that the

paint will be useless if it is painted over with ordinary paint or overlaid with wallpaper.

**Carpets and soft furnishings.** Shampoo carpets and other soft furnishings, affected by mould, with a suitable cleaning agent. Brushing and vacuuming mould can release spores and create the risk of breathing problems.

**Clothing.** Dry clean mould-affected clothing.

# How can I recognise whether I have a condensation problem or a damp problem?

Condensation is often accompanied by mould growth, which means that often you can see it and sometimes even smell it. Condensation tends to be worse in cold weather. Other forms of dampness tend to be worse in wet weather (except for plumbing leaks, which can happen at any time).



Other forms of damp such as rising damp, leaks from plumbing and structural leaks often leave a line or mark called a 'tidemark', whereas condensation does not leave a 'tidemark'.

Mould can also accompany dampness caused by leaks, but mould rarely appears with rising damp



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