

Rising damp, condensation, water penetration and leaks



This document provides information to help diagnose, manage and resolve damp related problems.

Rising damp

This is the technical term describing moisture rising up a wall.



Rising damp from floor level before plaster damage has taken place.

Rising damp becomes evident in the form of stained walls, blistering and peeling paintwork as well as salt accumulation up to one meter high.

Rising damp can arise for various reasons, the common causes are; failure of an existing damp proof course and bridging due to the raising of either external or internal ground levels.



Rising damp with salt deposits and crumbling plasterwork.

Ground water contains soluble salts and if it isn't treated large quantities of salts appear within the masonry and on decorative surfaces.

A common diagnosis of rising damp is the presence of salt deposits and alternatively if black mould is on the surface, this will not be rising damp as black moulds won't grow where salt is present.

'If black mould is on the surface, this will not be rising damp as black moulds won't grow where salt is present.'

What do I do if I think I have rising damp?

If your home is suffering from any of the problems described above please contact OneCALL on 0345 8 507 507.

Condensation

Condensation is the most common cause of household damp problems.



This picture shows the effects of condensation in the corner of a room. Note the way that the black mould climbs and concentrates on the coldest part of the wall – an outside corner.



This mould only grows in the pure water produced by condensation and although black mould is the most common, mould can be many colours when growing on other surfaces such as carpets, curtains, bedding and clothing.

It can be a problem in any home, old or new and it most often happens during the winter months as the air in your home is much warmer than the air outside. However it can also occur in summer or on very hot days and it is caused by air releasing its moisture when it comes into contact with a cooler surface; this can be seen using a glass filled with ice cubes as condensation forms on the outside surface of the glass.



Condensation occurs with any cold object, wall or window when the moist warm air comes into contact with it and typical problems occur with condensation forming on walls, ceilings, windows and furniture. If these surfaces remain wet this will promote the growth of mildew and black moulds.

Windows are often the first place in your home where you notice the first signs of condensation; this indicates that the air in your house has too much moisture in it but with many activities in the home producing moisture, or water vapour we must all take steps to reduce this to a minimum.

‘Black mould growth is the most common effect of condensation.’

Condensation continued



This picture shows extensive black mould growth at low level indicating poor ventilation and air circulation.



Further investigation reveals the air-vent has been blocked with old newspaper.

This highlights the need not to obstruct or block any air vents around the home with furniture or by any other means.

Water vapour is generated in your home in many ways but the main causes are:

- steam from cooking and boiling the kettle;
- baths and showers;
- drying clothes inside on the radiator; and
- unsuitable venting of tumble dryers.

The importance of ventilation

Promoting good ventilation and air circulation around the home is very important in the prevention of condensation; this allows the air to release its moisture outside preventing future problems inside your home.

An example of poor ventilation causing condensation can be seen above.

‘Promoting good ventilation and air circulation around the home is very important in preventing condensation.’

Useful tips for reducing moisture in the home

In the kitchen

- To reduce the moisture in the air use your extractor fan if you have one, open a window when you are cooking, cover pans and switch off kettles once they have boiled.
- Close the kitchen door when cooking to prevent the moist air entering other areas of our home.

In the bathroom

- Always close the door when having a bath or shower, open a window and leave it open for at least half an hour after to allow the air time to release the moisture.
- Don't leave your bath full of hot water for longer than you have to as surface evaporation increase the air moisture.

In the bedroom

- Keep your bedroom as warm as you can to compensate for the drop in temperature at night.
- Open your window to allow the air to circulate.
- Move furniture away from the wall a little to allow air to circulate behind it - this is particularly important when items are position against outside walls.

General tips

- Where possible dry your clothes outside or on an airer and not on the radiator.
- In cold weather, keep some form of heating on permanently in your home.

- Hang your curtains so they don't touch the wall if possible to allow air to circulate.
- Close the internal doors especially when using the bathroom or kitchen. Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles to prevent mildew and moulds forming.
- Open windows for a while each day to allow a change of air.

Remember

- Condensation will not occur if you allow air to circulate freely and take steps to reduce the amount of moisture in the air.

Did you know?

- A family of four can add moisture to the air equivalent to 30 to 40 litres of water a week.
- Showering, cooking, bathing and washing can add 15 to 20 litres a week.
- Drying clothes indoors can add 10 to 15 litres a week.

What do I do if I think I have condensation?

If you are suffering from any of the condensation problems described you should clean the affected area removing all traces of mould and follow the guidance given. If the affected area requires re-decorating after cleaning use an anti-mould paint available from all DIY stores and where wallpapering is required use only an anti-mould wallpaper paste.

If your problems persists after following the guidance please contact OneCALL on 0345 8 507 507 and we will arrange for a damp expert to contact you.

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Water penetration and leaks

Further considering the symptoms of rising damp and condensation, these can also arise from unintended water in your home caused by leaking pipes or deterioration of the roof and walls.

If you are concerned that this may be happening please consider the list of possible causes below particularly in the same location of the damp problems.

External investigation

- Blocked gutters, especially in the hidden valleys of the roof or defective rainwater pipes.
- Defective valley gutters and flat roofs.
- Missing, broken, displaced or loose tiles or slates.
- Faulty lead flashing around chimneys.
- Deterioration of mortar in brickwork joints.
- Bridging over the damp proof course by soil in flower beds, plinths, or raised patio areas and so on.
- Blocked or obstructed air-bricks.
- Cracked or broken rain-water and waste-water pipes.
- Blocked grates or gullies.
- Broken seal around window frames.
- Running overflow pipes from cisterns or water tanks.
- Ivy or other climbing plants damaging brickwork, gutters, roofs and so on.

Internal investigation

- Plumbing defects such as leaking pipes; water, heating, waste or overflow.
- If timber floorboards are fitted good under-floor ventilation is important and careful attention must be given to ensure air vents or air-bricks in the external walls are clear of any obstructions.

What do I do if I think I have water penetration or leaks?

If you think your home is suffering from internal or external leaks please contact OneCALL on 0345 8 507 507 and request a repair.

We are committed to providing equal access to information. If you would like this information in another format, please phone us on 0345 8 507 507.