



A guide to keeping your home
free from condensation

What is condensation?

Condensation occurs when warm moist air comes into contact with a cool surface and water droplets form. You notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when your bathroom mirror steams up.

Condensation typically appears on cold surfaces particularly on outside walls where there is not much air movement or to the sides of windows. It often appears as black mould growth in corners near the skirting and on the ceiling.

Areas with poor ventilation are also prone to condensation. This includes surfaces behind furniture such as beds or in or behind wardrobes and cupboards, especially where they are placed against an outside wall. Condensation can happen in any room but is most likely to occur in your bedrooms and hallway as they are cooler.

If left unchecked it can lead to damp and mould growth occurring which is often the first sign of a serious condensation problem.







Causes of condensation?

The degree to which condensation occurs in your home is dependant on four factors:

- **Moisture produced within your home** - There is always some moisture in the air, created by everyday activities such as cooking, washing, drying clothes and bathing. Your body produces moisture all the time, even just sleeping, one person generates about half a litre of water in a night through breathing and perspiration (refer to table below).

Other significant causes include unvented tumble dryers and the use of bottled gas heaters or paraffin heaters.

- **Lack of ventilation** - Without ventilation the moist air is kept within the property.
- **Internal temperature** - Warm air can hold more moisture so when the temperature falls so does its ability to hold water vapour that will condensate.
- **Insulation – A lack of insulation** will result in cold surfaces allowing condensation to form whilst reducing the ability to maintain a consistent internal temperature (refer above).

Two people active for one day		3 pints
Cooking and boiling a kettle		6 pints
Having a bath or shower		2 pints
Washing clothes		1 pint
Drying clothes		9 pints
Using a paraffin or bottled gas heater		3 pints
Total amount of moisture produced in your home in one day		24 pints



First Questions in tackling the problem:

Does the damp (not mould) seem to get worse after it has rained?

If the answer is yes, you should report this issue to Harlow Council.

Have you got damp or mould in several places in your home?

If the answer is yes, you may have condensation issues and should follow the guide in this leaflet.

Have you noticed the damp or mould gets worse in the colder months?

If the answer is yes, you may have condensation issues and should follow the guide before reporting the issue to Harlow Council.

Do you have extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom if so, are they functioning correctly?

Please ensure the fans are cleaned regularly and checked to see if they are working. If not please report this to HTS for a repair.

Are you ventilating your home by opening windows or the window trickle vents?

Ventilation is an effective way of controlling damp and mould.

Are you maintaining a healthy temperature level within your home, especially in the colder months?

It is important to maintain a health temperature particularly in the mornings and evenings, stopping damp and mould.

Loft insulation keeps your home warm and should be between 150mm and 250mm.

If your loft insulation is less than 150mm then, please contact Harlow Council.

Reduce the risk of condensation in your home by undertaking the following measures:

Reduce moisture

- Cover saucepans and close the kitchen door during and after cooking.
- Close the bathroom door during and after bathing or showering.
- Dry clothes outside where possible and not over radiators. Otherwise confine drying to a single room (preferably the bathroom) and open the window and close the door.
- Vent tumble driers to the outside.
- When bathing, run cold water first and then hot to minimise steam.
- Cover fish tanks.
- Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles.



Improve ventilation

- Keep a window open or use extract fans during and after cooking, washing and drying clothes.

- Open windows slightly when home is occupied or use fitted trickle vents. A trickle vent is a very small opening in a window or other building envelope component to allow small amounts of ventilation in spaces intended to be naturally ventilated when major elements of the design windows, doors, etc



- Do not block air vents – particularly important where gas and heating appliances require oxygen for combustion while permitting carbon monoxide to escape.
- Allow air to circulate – Move beds and furniture away from walls and do not over fill wardrobes.

Heating and Insulation

- Maintain a low heat when the weather is cold or wet – this is more effective in keeping your home warmer and costs less than short bursts of high heat. Heat all rooms even those not used.
- Do not obstruct radiators with furniture or overhanging curtains that prevent heat circulation.
- Allow sunlight into your home to help warm rooms.
- Insulating your loft and walls will help. If your home is not insulated, contact Harlow Council for details of work planned for your area.

Already have mould ?

If you have mould prior to receiving this guide, then it can be removed relatively easily.

Mould is a living organism and needs to be killed. To do this, wipe down affected surfaces with a Health and Safety Executive approved fungicidal wash and follow the manufacturer's instructions. This should be continued as a regular cleaning routine.

If the walls are to be decorated, use a good quality anti-mould paint to help prevent mould reoccurring. Avoid the use of wallpaper where rooms are susceptible to condensation and mould.

What to do next

If you have followed the advice given in this leaflet and taken all reasonable steps to prevent condensation and mould occurring, then you should begin to notice considerable improvement within four to six weeks.

If you continue to experience problems, it may be due to another cause. Common minor repairs such as the list below could be contributing:

- Leaks, plumbing faults.
- Roof leaks
- Guttering faults
- Damaged outside walls or eroded pointing

These can be reported to HTS Group Ltd Repairs, by calling telephone number 01279 446666.

Other more complex matters such as the ground level outside overlapping the damp proof course, rising damp, penetrating damp, structural issues, could be contributing and it may require a technical survey carried out on the property. This can be arranged by contacting Contact Harlow or alternatively, raising a damp self-assessment enquiry on Harlow Council's website and they will organise a surveyor to inspect your home.