

# Keeping your home free from condensation and mould growth

A guide for Tower Hamlets Council tenants



2006-2007  
Early Intervention (Children at Risk)  
2003-2006  
Winner of 4 previous Beacon Awards



## What is condensation?

Condensation is dampness that comes from water vapour in the air. It occurs to some degree in all homes but, if left unchecked, it can become a serious problem.

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. Lots of extra moisture is created by everyday activities such as cooking, washing clothes and bathing. Even asleep one person generates about half a litre of water in a night just from breathing and perspiration.

Warm air can hold more moisture than cold air. If the air gets colder it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny droplets of water appear. You notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath.

Condensation often happens because warm damp air from kitchens and bathrooms circulates into colder areas such as bedrooms. It occurs in cold weather, whether it is raining or dry.

Condensation typically appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little air movement such as in corners, on or near windows or in and behind wardrobes and cupboards. The appearance of mould in these areas is often the first sign of a serious condensation problem.



## Causes of condensation

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

- ◆ How much moisture is generated within your home
- ◆ The amount of ventilation
- ◆ How well your home is insulated
- ◆ The temperature of your home

All these factors need to be looked at to cure a condensation problem.



## Preventing condensation

It is important to take steps to keep condensation under control. Too much condensation will make your home damp and unhealthy. House dust mites and moulds occur more in damp conditions and these are associated with allergic reactions.

Damp conditions can also cause damage to your home such as by causing windows to rust or rot, and plaster to perish. Decorations can be spoilt by damp and mould growth.

Both the Council, as your landlord, and you, as the tenant, are responsible for keeping condensation under control.



*Reporting the fan not working could have prevented the mould build-up.*

## **The tenant's responsibilities**

### **Reducing moisture production**

- ◆ When cooking cover pans with lids and keep the kitchen door closed to stop wet air from circulating around your flat or house. Make sure a window is open or the extractor fan is on.
- ◆ If you use a tumble dryer make sure it is vented to the outside air
- ◆ If you have to dry clothes indoors ideally put them in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on. Alternatively put them on a clothes dryer in another room but make sure the door to the room is closed and the windows are open.
- ◆ When bathing, run cold water into the bath first, then run the hot water. This will minimise steam production.

### **Heating your home**

- ◆ Heat all rooms even if they are not being used.
- ◆ Do not place furniture or belongings in front of radiators as this will stop them heating the room efficiently.

- ◆ Do not use portable LPG (Calor Gas) heaters. These can produce three pints of moisture in five hours and are prohibited in our homes for health and safety reasons.
- ◆ Do not use the heating on a high setting for short periods of time. Heating your home for a longer time at a lower temperature will keep your home warmer and cost you less.
- ◆ If you have central heating use the thermostat to control the heating by setting the temperature to a comfortable level. The recommended temperature is 18 degrees C in your hall and 21 degrees C in your living room (or up to 23 degrees C if you have young children or are a pensioner).
- ◆ If your radiators have Thermostatic Radiator Valves (TRV's), these will give you greater control over the heat from each individual radiator.



If you need further advice about setting your thermostat and room temperature, contact the Council's Energy Services Team who can arrange a home visit by an Energy Advisor, (they have Advisors with Sylheti/Bengali language skills and can arrange translators for other languages).

The Energy Services Team can also provide assistance with draught proofing and other insulation measures to some tenants under the Cozyzone scheme, and advise you on other schemes that are available to help you save money and put you in control of your home energy use.

Contact the **Energy Services Team** on 📞 020 7364 2525

## Ventilating your home

It is important to allow plenty of fresh air into your home as otherwise the indoor air will become stale and humid, leading to unhealthy conditions.

- ◆ Always keep a small window ajar or a vent open when someone is in the room. It is best to keep vents open all the time.
- ◆ After you have had a bath or shower you need to open the bathroom window for a while until the steam has cleared, or alternatively use the extractor fan if you have one.
- ◆ When cooking make sure that the kitchen door is closed and either the extractor fan is on (if you have one), or a window is open
- ◆ Do not switch off or tamper with any ventilation equipment provided in your home.



Some of our homes are fitted with extractor fans. These are used to quickly remove damp air from the kitchen and bathroom where the most moisture is produced.

- ◆ Fans should be used whenever you are cooking or bathing. After you have finished in the bathroom or the kitchen leave the fan on for about 20 minutes to ensure that all damp air is cleared.

- ◆ An extractor fan will only work if the windows in the room are kept closed. If a window is open the fan will draw air in from outside, rather than drawing out the damp air from the room.
- ◆ Some fans switch on and off automatically according to the amount of moisture in the air. Do not turn these off at the power switch as they are designed to work when they are needed. If you suspect that they are coming on more or less often than they should, then you need to report this to the Repairs Help Centre.



*Mould and mildew need damp, humid places to grow.*

## Looking after your home

- ◆ Wipe down the inside of windows if they become wet with condensation.
- ◆ Try not to place beds and wardrobes against outside walls as mould is more likely to grow behind furniture.
- ◆ Don't put too many things in wardrobes and cupboards as it stops the air circulating.
- ◆ Remove small patches of mould that may appear on surfaces using one of the mould cleaning products suitable for that purpose. These are obtainable from supermarkets. Make sure that you use a product which carries a Health and Safety Executive 'approval number', and that you follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- ◆ When redecorating bathrooms and kitchens use a paint formulated for these areas.
- ◆ Do not decorate over walls or ceilings that have been decorated using fungicidal paint, with ordinary paints or wallpapers.
- ◆ Report any repairs to the Repairs Help Centre. This includes defects to extractor fans and heating systems.
- ◆ Contact the Repairs Help Centre for further advice on what the Council can do to assist you where you have a problem with damp and mould.



*Damage to decorations caused by condensation.*



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## The Council's responsibilities

The Council as your landlord has to meet certain obligations with regard to the structure of your home and the facilities provided.

- ◆ To make reasonable provision for heating.
- ◆ To ensure there is reasonable thermal insulation to the structure of the dwelling.
- ◆ To make provision for ventilation, such as to provide extractor fans and air vents where appropriate.
- ◆ To carry out any repairs your home in accordance with the Council's repairing obligations. Such as to ensure extractor fans and heating systems are in working order, and that there are not other sources of dampness such as plumbing or rainwater leaks.

The Council will consider carrying out remedial works for condensation and mould growth only when all the criteria below have been met:

- ◆ Where the condensation and mould growth is significant and presents a hazard to health.
- ◆ Where the problem is due to insufficient facilities for heating or ventilation, or poor thermal insulation.
- ◆ Where you as the householder have followed the advice given in this leaflet and taken all reasonable steps to prevent the problem occurring.

Contact the Repairs Help Centre for further advice on what the Council can do to assist you when you have a problem with damp and mould.

## How to contact us

### Repairs Help Centre

If you need help and advice with damp problems or any other repairs, you can call a 24 hour freephone Housing Repairs line on the following numbers:

Housing Repairs - English 📞 0800 376 1637

Housing Repairs - Sylheti 📞 0800 376 1638

**Note:** If you call from a mobile phone your service provider may charge you.

If you are hard of hearing and use a minicom text phone, please call 📞 0800 376 1636, available 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.

If you do not have access to a telephone, our Local Housing Offices have a freephone direct to the Repairs Help Centre.

Or you can write to:

Repairs Help Centre  
Tower Hamlets Council  
Mulberry Place  
5 Clove Crescent  
London E14 2BG

Or email: [housing.repairs@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:housing.repairs@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## **Energy Services Team**

For advice about energy conservation call the Energy Services Team on 📞 020 7364 2525, available 9am-5pm Monday-Friday.

Or you can write to:

Energy Services Team  
Tower Hamlets Council  
Mulberry Place (AH)  
PO Box 55739  
5 Clove Crescent  
London E14 1BY

If you have any comments on this document please e-mail us:  
[housing.publicationscomment@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:housing.publicationscomment@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

This leaflet is also available in large print and on audio tape.



020 7364 6087 to obtain a copy in either format.

যদি আপনি এই গাইড বোঝার ব্যাপারে সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন বোধ করেন,  
অনুগ্রহ করে আপনার স্থানীয় হাউজিং অফিসে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Haddii aad caawimo uga baahan tahay fahamka  
tilmaamahan, fadlan waxad kala xidhiidhaa xafiiska  
guryaha ee degaankaaga

Nếu bạn cần được giúp để hiểu được chỉ dẫn này,  
xin liên hệ với phòng nhà cửa địa phương của bạn

如果你對明白這份指南需要幫助，請聯絡  
你區內的房屋辦事處。