**Damp and mould guidance and advice**

Damp and Mould can be common in many properties. Even in warm, well looked after properties mould growth can occur in some parts of the home, especially in the colder months.  Most mould growth is the result of condensation; however some instances of damp and mould may be the result of structural defects causing condensation and/or dampness.

 

Below you can find some information about damp and mould in your property looking at the main sources and some helpful tips for how to minimise damp, condensation, and mould in your home.

What are the Causes of dampness and condensation in your house?

* Lack of adequate heating and/or ventilation.
* Rain can get in through leaking roofs, blocked or damaged guttering, leaky walls and poorly fitting doors and windows.
* Leaks from plumbing faults, failed appliances and poorly sealed baths and showers can quickly build up, often where you can’t see them
* Rising damp - dampness from the ground rising into the walls
* High levels of moisture/water vapour being produced inside the house and not being allowed to escape through windows or other means of ventilation.

Why it is important to keep a house dry as well as warm?

Moulds and other fungi can grow in damp homes, particularly in areas where there is restricted ventilation, such as inside or behind cupboards and wardrobes.

* Humidity

The moisture contained in air is called humidity and the higher the temperature of the air the more water it can hold.

The more humid the air is in your house, the more energy it takes to warm your house because it is also warming the water in the air. This means it will be more expensive to heat.

* Humidity and condensation

When the humidity is high inside your house, and it is cold outside the water vapour condenses on cold surfaces. The following areas might have problems with condensation and dampness:

* Cold surfaces such as mirrors, windows, and metal window frames
* Kitchens and bathrooms
* Solid, uninsulated walls of inadequately heated rooms
* Cold corners in inadequately heated rooms, particularly where outside walls meet
* Inside and behind furniture such as wardrobes, cupboards.

Humid air and condensation is generated by things we all do in our homes on a daily basis. The table below gives some examples.

| **Table showing sources of humidity and damp** |
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| **Source of humidity/moisture** | **Litres of water vapour** |
| Cooking | Up to 3 litres per day |
| Clothes washing | 0.5 litres per wash |
| Showers and baths | 1.5 litres per person |
| Washing dishes | Up to 1 litre per day |
| clothes drying  | 5.0 litres per load |
| Portable gas heater | 0.5-1.0 litre per hour of use |
| Breathing, active adult | 0.2 litres an hour per person |
| Breathing, adult asleep | 0.02 litres an hour per person |
| Potted plants | A high number of pot plants or if you frequently water them will increase humidity in your house |

How can you keep your house dry and avoid condensation?

There are four main things that you can do.

1. Reduce the amount of moisture produced in the home
2. Provide ventilation, particularly in moisture-prone areas
3. Increase heating to raise the temperature of the air and the cold surfaces
4. Insulate the building to warm up cold surfaces and keep the heat in

Cheap and easy actions

* On dry days open some windows to allow humid air to ventilate out of your house. It is better to open a few windows a little throughout the whole house. This helps the air to move through the house. One window open wide in one room may not be as effective. Try to do this as often as possible (2-3 times a week), but keep windows closed on wet days as damp air may increase indoor humidity.
* Keep lids on your pots and pans when you cook – simmer rather than boil hard.
* Keep the doors to the bathroom and kitchen closed when you are bathing or cooking.
* Open and close curtains, keeping them open in the day and closed before dusk. This will capture the free heat from the sun and help to lift indoor temperatures.
* Always wipe excess moisture from windows – if you don’t the moisture will collect on the frame which may start to rot. It may also re-evaporate during the day, raising humidity levels and making condensation worse when the room cools down.
* Keep furniture away from outside walls to allow air circulation. Cool areas behind furniture will be high humidity areas assisting mould growth
* Limit the number of pot plants in your house.
* If you don’t have double glazed windows install temporary plastic window insulation kits on your windows for the cooler months of the year.

Heating

* On cold days try to keep indoor temperatures at least 18°C.
* Where possible install efficient heating, suitable for each of the rooms being heated.
* Avoid the use of portable gas heaters. They create high levels of humidity and are expensive to run. They also release harmful gases into the air.
* Install a heater in your bathroom.
* Dehumidifiers extract moisture from the air and can help reduce humidity. However, they do not tend to solve underlying problems of moisture getting into your house, excess moisture production in the home, and lack of ventilation and heating.

Drying clothes

* Wherever possible, dry your clothes outside.
* If you use a clothes dryer, make sure that it is vented outside.
* If you must dry your clothes on a clothes rack inside, do this in a well-ventilated room with doors closed to the rest of the house.