How To Avoid Condensation and Mould In Your Home

Following the recent window sealant project it was noted that there are many instances where flats are suffering from condensation as well as dampness. This leaflet has been produced for everyone who lives in the block to help understand condensation and how to reduce it.

What is condensation?

There is always moisture in the air. Condensation is merely the air's natural moisture content settling on cool surfaces. It is similar to taking a bottle out of the fridge which steams up in a short time. Likewise, if you wear glasses, going from cold outside to a warm room has a similar effect on the lenses.

The increased incidence of condensation in our flats today is a direct result of changes in modem living conditions. Ill-fitting doors have been replaced or fitted with draught proofing and windows have been replaced with UPVC double-glazing. These modern aids have created rooms which are warmer but which often have less ventilation and fewer air changes. The result is that water vapour produced by normal living activities is no longer able to escape.

Where does water vapour come from?

The most common sources of water vapour come from basic household chores, which can produce up to 20 pints of water vapour each day within your flat.

Examples of daily activities that produce this moisture include:

- Washing and drying clothes
- Cooking
- Bathing and showering
- Washing dishes
- Water from house plants

Additionally, two people asleep for a night will produce another one to two pints.

Where can condensation occur?

Condensation can occur in a number of places, usually at cold spots i.e. an unheated room or a glazed-in balcony without any form of adequate heating. Solid concrete walls within a glazed-in balcony or the main bedroom wall of an 'A' flat are also ideal places where condensation will form.

Condensation forming on the inside glass or frame of a window indicates a high water vapour content present and that the temperature of the room side surface is inadequate.

Please note, however, that condensation within the airspace of a sealed glass unit indicates the seal of the unit has deteriorated and the affected unit needs replacing.

How to reduce condensation

It is important to remove excess water vapour from your flat before it forms condensation. Condensation that doesn't dry out or escape through adequate ventilation can cause mould to form on walls, windows sills, furniture, clothes, and cold water pipes.

The following tips will help you to reduce condensation in your flat.

Reduce the moisture

- Cover pans and only simmer when cooking, and do not leave kettles boiling - this will also cut your fuel bills!
- Dry your clothes in a well-ventilated room (with a window open). Don't dry clothes on your radiators as this puts large amounts of moisture into the air. Also remember, covering radiators stops your room getting warm and keeping dry.
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors when in use to prevent steam going into colder rooms.
- In cold weather, keep your heating on low all day throughout your home - this is important to help prevent condensation build up.
- Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles.
- Where fitted use an extractor fan in the kitchen as these are effective and cheap to run.

Ventilate to remove moisture

- Keep a small window ajar when someone is in a room (some UPVC double glazed windows have a trickle ventilator you can use instead).
- Open windows when cooking, drying clothes and taking a bath or shower and leave them open for a short time after use to allow fresh dry air to circulate through your flat and let the moisture escape.
- Avoid putting too many articles in cupboards and wardrobes as this stops the air circulating.
- Leave a space between the back of large furniture and the wall to allow air to flow.
- Where possible, position furniture against warmer internal walls.
- Vent tumble dryers to the outside, unless it is the self-condensing type.

Insulate cold spots

- Solid concrete walls forming part of an enclosed balcony or the main bedroom wall of an 'A' flat should be insulated. A cheap method is to affix insulation to the inside walls. An example is the use of Sempatap Thermal available through Mould Growth Consultants Ltd at www.mgcltd.co.uk who should be contacted for more details.

How to treat mould

In severe cases of condensation dark spots of mould will appear. To kill and remove mould, wipe down the affected walls and window frames with either a weak bleach solution or a fungicidal wash, which is available from most DIY shops.

Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets. Avoid disturbing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning as it can make any existing respiratory problems worse.

Remember

Adequate heating + insulation + increased ventilation = less condensation