

INTERNAL CONDENSATION

What is condensation?

Condensation occurs when water vapour suspended in the air settles on a cold surface. The moist air condenses on cold surfaces such as walls, mirrors, tiles and glass. It is most common in the winter months of the year when it gets colder and the temperature falls.

Condensation is related to the way in which the home-owner heats, ventilates and insulates the home. In years gone by, houses were generally well ventilated because of things such as chimneys or draughty windows and doors which allowed up to four air changes per hour. This natural process prevented condensation. To cope with increases in fuel costs came the trend to insulate houses, such as thicker loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and energy efficient double glazing. As a result, more energy efficient homes may be more susceptible to condensation as any device which helps to keep warm air in will also keep fresh air out .

What causes condensation?

Everyday things like cooking, bathing, drying clothes in the home and even breathing cause moisture, which is released into the air. The air can only hold a certain amount of water vapour - the warmer it is, the more it can hold. If this is cooled by contact with a cold surface the water vapour will turn into droplets of water - condensation.

How do I prevent or reduce condensation?

- * Keep all rooms heated and try to maintain an even temperature throughout to avoid cold-spots.
- * While cooking, bathing or washing, use an extractor fan and/or open a window and keep the door closed. Keep the extractor fan on and/or the window open for about 20 minutes after you have finished (with the door closed)
- * Leave trickle vents (slotted vents in the window frames) open when rooms are occupied – even in the winter when your heating is on. These vents provide constant ventilation which removes water vapour.
- * Dry your washing outside the home whenever you can. You can also hang it in the bathroom, keeping the door closed and the window open slightly.
- * Permanently vent your tumble drier to the outside of your home if not a condensing drier.

Summary

Condensation is a result of the build up of moisture caused by our normal daily lifestyle and continual improvement and modernisation of homes. It is up to the homeowner to control the amount of water vapour displaced within the household and to provide controlled ventilation to dispel the problem before it actually arises.

Double glazing cannot cause condensation.

Did You Know?

An average family creates up to 20 pints of moisture every day, simply by washing, cooking and breathing. This moisture needs to be dealt with in order to help avoid condensation.