Factsheet

# Condensation

## What Is Condensation?

The most common type of dampness in a home is condensation. This happens when moisture in the air is released and comes into contact with surfaces. These can be ceilings, walls or windows. It happens in rooms where there is a lot of moisture in the air, such as bathrooms and kitchens. This can appear as black mould growing on surfaces and can be made worse if windows and doors are kept closed. Also, if you are drying clothes in a room, for example on a radiator, this introduces more moisture into the air. Homes have changed over the years. Fireplaces have been removed and double glazed windows and doors have been fitted. This means that air with moisture in it does not have anywhere to go.

Condensation often forms on cold surfaces such as windows and poorly insulated walls. When this happens it can cause damp and mould can grow.

### Is condensation bad for me and my home?

Yes. This is because it causes a decline to the decoration and it can cause building materials to decay. It also creates an unhealthy place to live.

Countrywide
HOME SURVEYS

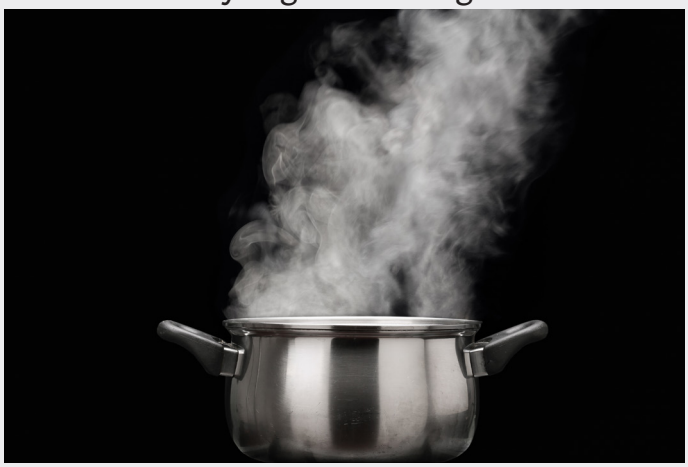
Factsheet

# What Can I Do To Help Stop Condensation?

The amount of condensation in the home depends on different things. These can be what the home is made of and the position of the home. Also weather conditions, how you live in the home and how you heat and air the home.

The first step is to control the temperature of surfaces. Condensation can happen when surfaces are much colder than the temperature of a room. When this happens the moisture in the air hits a colder surface and turns to water droplets. Control can be maintained by having a balance of enough thermal insulation and letting fresh air into the home.

Many people do not like cold air coming into a room and they might use draught excluders. But it's important to have fresh air in a room to stop condensation forming. Draught proofing can be good because it keeps heat in the home and this can help stop condensation problems developing, but draught proofing must never block any permanent ways of air coming in, such as air bricks or trickle vents to windows.



Having a balance of heating and fresh air coming in to the home will help keep condensation at a low level. It is also good to think about how much water you allow in to the air. Drying clothes on radiators, or cooking without lids on saucepans, can let a lot of water go in to the air.

Countrywide
HOME SURVEYS

Factsheet

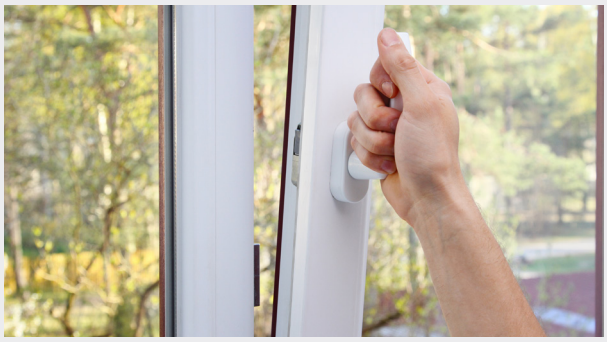
# Our Tips To Help You Keep Condensation At A Low Level

## Ventilation

Ventilation means letting air in to the home and this will help keep condensation levels low. If you do this you can stop mould growing and damp appearing. It's also good for your health as it replaces stale air. You should always have a permanent way for air to come in the home, either by background ventilation, opening windows to let air in where needed quickly, or mechanical extraction systems for rooms where there can be extra moisture, such as bathrooms and kitchens.

## Occasional Quick Ventilation

A simple solution can be used. If you are cooking, showering, or drying clothes inside the home, either on radiators, or on a clothes drying rack, open a window. This will let the water vapour escape into the atmosphere.



## Mechanical Ventilation

Kitchens, bathrooms and shower rooms create the most water vapour. This is because we use these rooms for activities such as cooking, washing and bathing, and they involve the use of water. The best way to manage this is to put in mechanical extractor fans. These remove air with moisture in it.

Extractor fans work best when they begin working automatically when the moisture in the air is too high. Ideally fit a fan with a Humidistat. This is a device which automatically regulates the moisture in the air of a room. If you do not have an automatically controlled extractor fan make sure you turn on your extractor fan when having a bath or shower, and also when cooking.

Countrywide
HOME SURVEYS

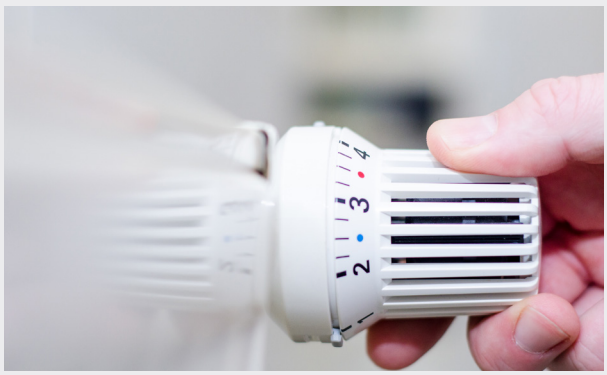
Factsheet

# Our Tips To Help You Keep Condensation At A Low Level

## Background Ventilation

Background ventilation is the passive flow of air in and out of the home. This happens without you physically having to take action to make it happen. Windows in modern homes are often fitted with trickle vents. These vents are very small openings in a window that allow small amounts of air to come into spaces intended to be naturally ventilated when major elements of the home's design are otherwise closed. In older properties air bricks were used, often to provide ventilation to areas where the air was still, an example of this is an understairs cupboard.

You will find condensation in parts of the home where air does not flow, or there is little fresh air. An example of this can be behind furniture, or in corners of rooms. A good thing to do is allow space for air to move around furniture. It is also better to put furniture against internal walls rather than against colder external walls.



## Heating your Home

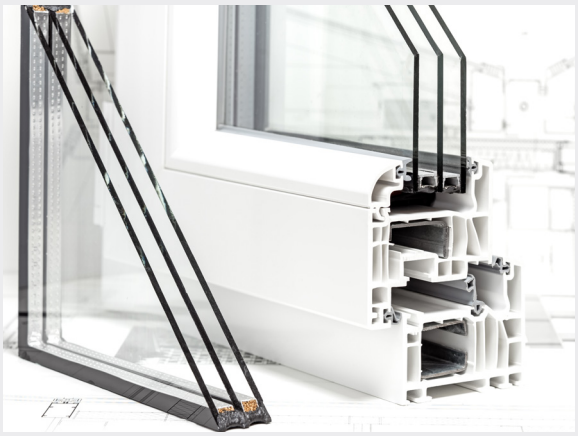
Keeping the home warm helps reduce condensation because surface temperatures inside will be higher and that means water vapour in the air is less likely to turn into water droplets. In colder months keep heating on a low temperature in all rooms and keep it on all day. You should do this even if no one is home. And it's especially important in bungalows or flats where the bedrooms are not above warm living rooms. It is better to have radiators with heat level controls. These help you keep each room at a constant, comfortable temperature and ensure costs can be kept lower.

Countrywide
HOME SURVEYS

Factsheet

# Our Tips To Help You Keep Condensation At A Low Level

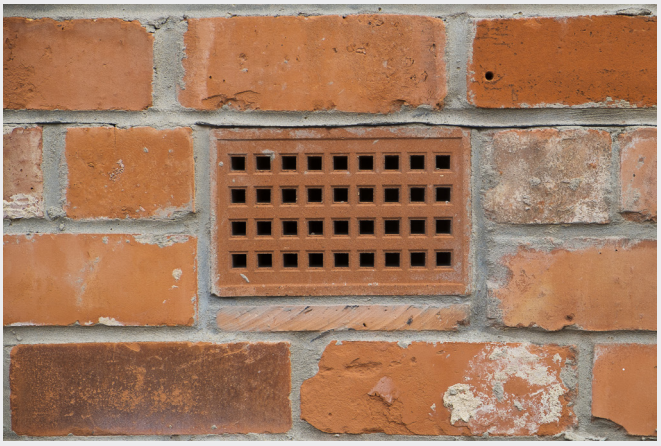
## The Importance of Insulation



If a property has good insulation this can help to make sure surfaces are kept warmer. If moisture in the air hits warmer surfaces and if this is more compatible with the temperature of the air less water droplets can form. Improving the insulation in the walls, floors and roof of the home, and installing more energy efficient glazing in windows, will help to reduce condensation forming. This works best when combined with suitable air flow in the home.

## Sub Floor Ventilation

Some properties have suspended timber floors. This is where timber floorboards are attached to joists just above the foundations of the home. They are raised off the ground and the space below the timbers is called the sub-floor void. It is important that air can flow freely in the sub-floor void. To do this air bricks are spaced at low levels in the outside walls of the home. There should be a sufficient number of air bricks and they must be kept free of any blockages to allow air to flow freely. If there are not enough air bricks, or they are blocked, then condensation can develop and this can affect the timbers. If the moisture content is too high it increases the risk of serious wood rot and of an infestation by wood boring insects.

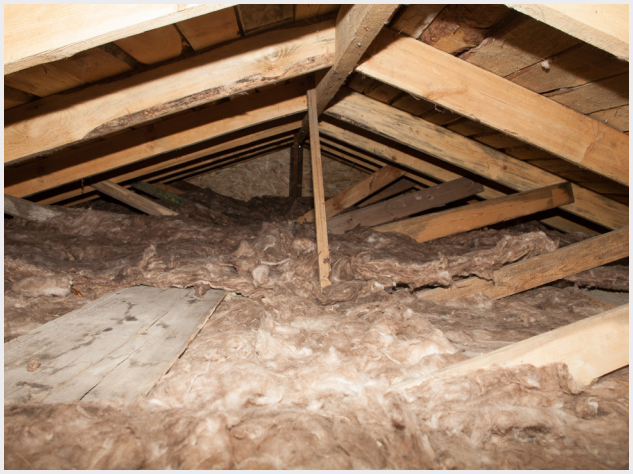


Countrywide
HOME SURVEYS

Factsheet

# Our Tips To Help You Keep Condensation At A Low Level

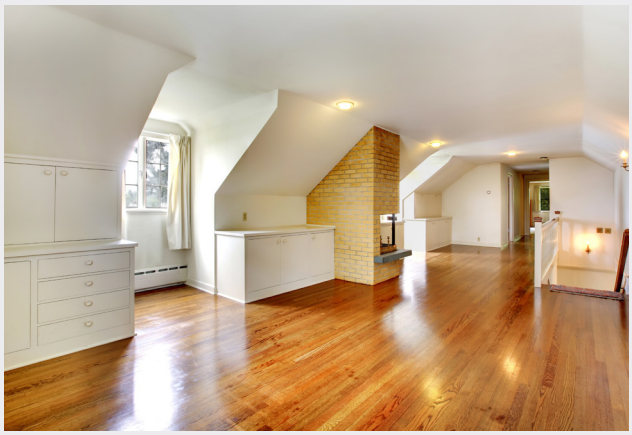
## Roof Space Ventilation



Allowing air to enter a roof space ensures moisture and condensation can move into the atmosphere. If the moisture and condensation has nowhere to go then any moisture can sit on the timbers. This can lead to timber defects such as rot forming and it can also leave the timbers at risk of wood boring insect attacks.

Often in older roofs air inlet points have become blocked as insulation levels have been increased.

In some properties the underside of the roof slope is finished as a ceiling. Typically these have been fitted with plaster board, or other materials, and sealed to create a finished ceiling effect.  These often have minimal insulation levels and do not allow air flow. These have an increased risk of condensation forming.

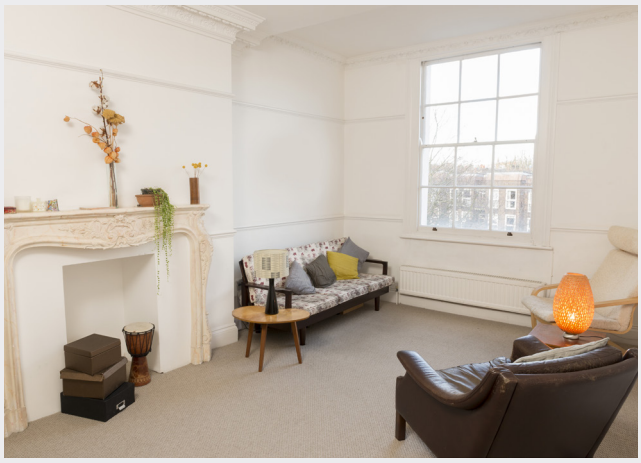


Countrywide
HOME SURVEYS

Factsheet

# Our Tips To Help You Keep Condensation At A Low Level

## Sealed Fireplaces



Older homes had a number of fireplaces to heat individual rooms. Many homes are now fitted with central heating systems. Because of this many fireplaces have been removed and the flues sealed. Even where the chimney remains open to the outside air, there can be a lack of air circulating within the flue and this can cause condensation to develop within the flue.

When condensation develops it mixes with gas deposits inside the chimney breast. This forms an acidic compound. This can leak through the brickwork to cause staining to the chimney breast. When this happens you can see the staining on the chimney breast from inside the home. These deposits are hygroscopic; this means they attract moisture from the air. Where air can flow into any unused flues it will help reduce this risk.

## What to do next?

If you're buying a home and have any concerns about dampness and condensation we can help. A Countrywide Home Survey can offer you peace of mind. We provide a report on the property and we'll tell you if we see issues potentially giving rise to dampness or any condensation. We can then guide you on the next steps or further action required.

**Let us guide you home with a Countrywide Home Survey.**

Countrywide
HOME SURVEYS