



Property Condensation Risks

There are many ways to reduce the risk and from a Landlords viewpoint a number of products are available which help to reduce the problem by allowing airflow into a room. This in itself brings about a further difficulty in that in the past this has led to draughts in rooms but now products can be obtained which can limit the problem.

An awareness of how condensation occurs will help us to understand and limit the impact of the problem. Modern building methods with airtight insulated buildings and central heating all lead to a significant increase in risk. When we had metal or wooden windows and doors that didn't fit as snugly as they do today there was always some natural form of ventilation and airflow into and through our homes and rooms. Now we have to be more careful. Cooking, showering, using domestic washing and drying machines and especially hanging washing on the radiators to dry all increase the risk of condensation.

The problem starts to occur when warm damp air hits a cold surface be it window panes, paintwork, tiling, or other wall finish. Warm damp air settles on a cold surface cooling to a dew point and here the problem starts. Not always immediately obvious but gradually a black mould (*Aspergillus niger*) will gradually appear. This could be on a window cill, window pane, wall tiling or grouting in bathrooms and kitchens, behind furniture which is tight up against a wall or in corners of rooms. These are the most common places to find that dreaded mould.

A few tips to reduce the risk include leaving a small window open in the bathroom once you have had that early morning shower, quite often the occupier of a property will turn off the extractor fan in a bathroom; if you are not going to open a window leave the extractor switched on, it is there to reduce the problems brought on by stagnant air. If you don't want to leave a window open at least increase airflow by opening doors in rooms. Ventilate the kitchen or utility when washing, drying or cooking or again activate the cooker hood extractor fan. Do not dry clothes on radiators, if you need to use an airer, radiators will start to rust if exposed to damp clothing. If you are a tenant advise your landlord or agent at the earliest opportunity. It is better than having the problem picked up on your check out.

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