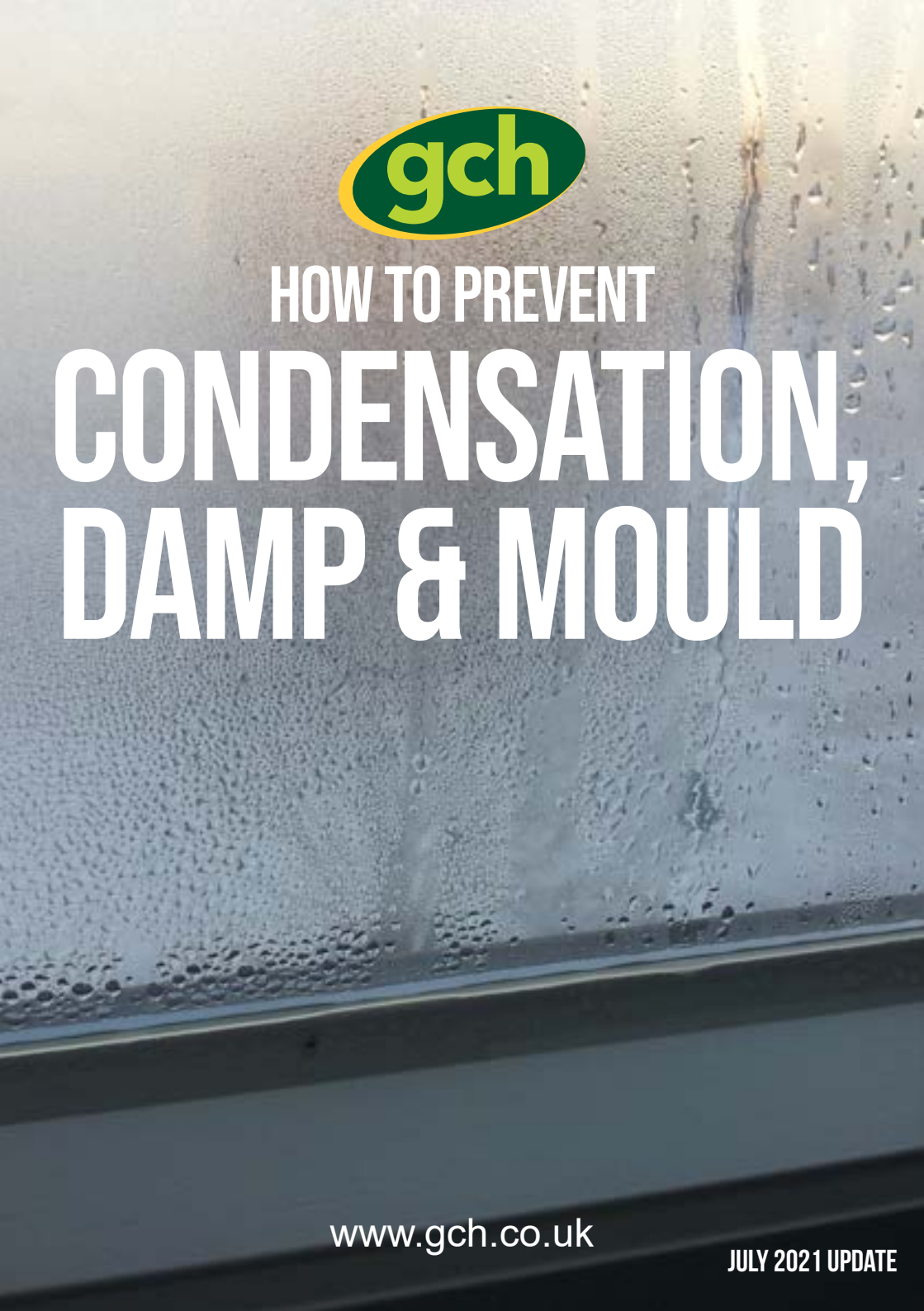

HOW TO PREVENT CONDENSATION, DAMP & MOULD

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What is condensation?

Even though you can't see it, the air in and around your home contains water vapour. The warmer the air, the more water it contains. When warm air comes into contact with cold surfaces such as outside walls, window panes, tiles or mirrors, the water vapour turns into droplets of water. This is condensation.

Every home will get condensation at some time. It's formed from the moisture we produce as we cook, wash, dry clothes and go about our everyday lives. Even our breathing produces water vapour - that's why bedroom windows can mist over on cold nights.

Where will you find condensation

Condensation is surface dampness. It can build up on almost any cold surface within our homes but is most common on:

- The inside of windows
- External walls (especially those that face north)
- In the corners of rooms
- In or behind cupboards or wardrobes.

Why is it a problem?

If condensation builds up regularly, surfaces can stay damp for a long time. When this happens, mould can begin to grow on walls and ceilings, furniture, soft furnishings (such as cushions and curtains) and on clothing stored in wardrobes and drawers.

When the weather is warm, condensation is less of a problem because we're more likely to have our doors and windows open, which allows excess moisture to escape. But when the weather gets colder, we tend to keep our windows and doors closed to keep the heat inside. That's when condensation and mould can become a problem.

What is Mould?

Mould grows and multiplies in moist areas, usually as a result of excess moisture in the air leading to condensation. Some mould growth in winter is normal but if left unteated it can become a serious problem.

What is Damp?

Damp is the presence of moisture and water within a property. It occurs in moist places that are unable to fully dry out, usually where there is little light or no air. It is nearly always caused by condensation.

STEP1: REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF MOISTURE YOU PRODUCE

The first step in tackling the problem of condensation is to reduce the amount of moisture you produce in your home.

Cooking

- Open a window or use an extractor fan if you have one. Leave the window open or the extractor fan switched on for 15 minutes after you've finished cooking to allow the steam to clear.
- Don't boil kettles or pans for longer than you have to, and make sure you put lids onto saucepans.
- Wipe away any condensation that forms on your windows or other surfaces. This will help to prevent the growth of mould.
- Close the kitchen door to prevent steam from escaping into the rest of the house.

Drying your clothes

- Avoid drying clothes indoors, especially on radiators. Hang clothes outside to dry, or use a tumble dryer instead, making sure it's vented to the outside of your property.

When you take a bath or shower

- Reduce steam by part-filling your bath with cold water before topping it up with hot water.

STEP2: IMPROVE THE VENTILATION IN YOUR HOME

Keeping your home well ventilated will reduce condensation by removing moist air from inside your home. Good ventilation is important, even when the weather is cold and we are understandably more reluctant to open our windows.

When you open a window to ventilate a room, make sure it doesn't cause a security problem. Check that the window isn't accessible from outside (such as from a garage or shed roof) and remember to close windows before you go out.

- Don't overfill cupboards or wardrobes, and don't push furniture right up against the wall. Leave enough room for air to circulate.
- Make sure that you don't block any air vents or air bricks in your property.
- Open a window or use an extractor fan when you're cooking or taking a bath.
- Open the interior doors of your home from time to time to allow dry air to circulate (but remember to shut kitchen and bathroom doors when you're cooking or washing).
- Keep a small window open slightly in the rooms that you're using. If your windows are fitted with trickle vents, check these are open. A trickle vent is an opening in a window frame that provides a small amount of ventilation.

STEP3: KEEP YOUR HOME WELL HEATED

Remember:

Keeping your home warm will help you to solve the problem of condensation, but only when combined with Steps 1 and 2 in this booklet. For more information on the most efficient ways to heat your home, visit the Energy Saving Trust website at www.est.org.uk

Dehumidifiers

- Dehumidifiers are useful if you need to dry out a damp room that has been damaged by a leak, but they won't deal with the main causes of condensation.

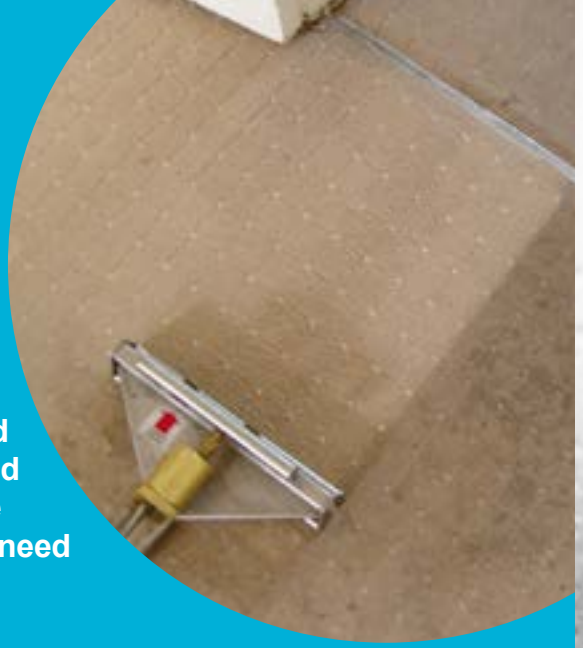
Ways to keep your house warm

- Condensation is less likely to develop in a warm home. In cold weather, set your thermostat to provide a low background heat throughout the day, even if you're not at home. This will warm up the whole building, not just the air inside the rooms. It means there will be less chance of warm, wet air coming into contact with cold walls and surfaces and causing condensation.
- Good insulation and draught-proofing will cut your fuel bills and help to warm the temperature inside your home and the surface temperature of external walls.
- Do not heat your home using bottled gas or paraffin heaters. This is stated in your tenancy agreement for the safety of yourself and others.

How to get rid of mould in your house...

Mould appears as sooty black speckles that cluster in dark patches on ceilings, walls, furniture, carpets, and even on your clothes. The mould and its spores carry the musty smell often associated with a poorly ventilated house.

To kill and remove the mould, you can wipe down or spray and wipe walls and window frames using 1 part bleach to 4 parts hot water and a small dash of washing up liquid. You can also buy fungicidal wash from supermarkets or DIY shops. When you apply the wash, make sure you wear rubber gloves and follow the manufactures instructions carefully on any products you buy.



If mould has spread to your carpets, these should be shampooed. Don't try to remove mould using a brush or vacuum cleaner as this could spread the mould spores around your home. If your clothes have been affected by mould, they'll need to be dry cleaned.

Once you've treated the mould and removed it, redecorate using fungicidal, mould-resistant paint. Or, if you're wallpapering, use a paste that contains a fungicide. This will help prevent the mould from coming back.

Remember:
The only sure way to prevent condensation and the build up of mould is to follow the three essential steps outlined in this booklet...

Lets recap...

STEP 1: Reduce the amount of moisture you produce

STEP 2: Improve the ventilation

STEP 3: Keep your home well heated

You must follow ALL three steps if you want to solve the problem of condensation.

Still Having Problems?

Mould and damp are usually caused by condensation, but not always. If you've followed all of the steps in this booklet and you're still having problems, the cause could be:

- A leaking water pipe, waste pipe, or overflow.
- Rain getting in through your roof because a tile or slate is missing.
- Blocked guttering.
- Rain seeping in around window frames.
- Rising damp caused by a defective or missing damp proof course.

Did you know?

Rising damp can usually be identified by a 'tide mark' at the edge of the area of damp, often towards the bottom of an interior wall. Leaks (or penetrating damp) cause patches of damp to form on wallpaper or plaster, but only in the area around the leak.

For any issues regarding damp, condensation or mould please call us on: 01452 424344, email us on repairs@gch.co.uk or visit www.gch.co.uk