

# Help with damp, mould and condensation

With colder weather, the possibility of damp and mould forming in your home increases. The presence of these issues can negatively affect both your living conditions and your health, so it's important to stay informed.

We've created this helpful guide to damp and mould to keep you updated on the latest government guidelines and share with you the support available.

## What is condensation?

Moisture is produced in all homes by breathing, cooking and washing. In fact, the average home produces 21 pints of water vapour a day. However, there is a limit to the amount of water vapour that air can contain. If there is too much moisture, it collects on cold surfaces, causing condensation.

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## Where will you find condensation?

Condensation is most present in rooms with high moisture levels, such as the kitchen and bathrooms. It's typically seen as steam on windows and damp patches on walls and ceilings.

## Why is it a problem?

Small amounts of condensation can be found in most homes, and for the most part, is controllable. However, if the condensation isn't dealt with, it can cause damp conditions and mould to grow. The development of mould can damage furniture, clothing and decorations while worsening health conditions that affect your breathing, immune system, and allergies.

Good ventilation helps to get rid of moisture being produced at the time, and to help dry any moisture that does settle on a surface.

## How to reduce condensation in your home

If you think you have condensation in your home, here are some practical tips and guidance to help.

The key to achieving a condensation free home is to ensure there is a balance between three elements:



**ventilation**



**heat**



**moisture**

### Kitchen

- Keep lids on your pans while cooking
- Ventilation — open your windows while cooking or washing and drying clothes
- Keep internal kitchen door closed while cooking
- If you have a tumble dryer, ventilate it outside. If that's not possible, don't use it at the same time as cooking
- Use an extractor fan while cooking, washing and drying clothes or washing dishes
- Don't let your kettle or pans boil for longer than necessary

### Bathroom

- Heat the room before taking a bath or shower
- Close the door while showering
- Open the window after showering
- Pour an inch of cold water in the bath before adding the hot water
- Use an extractor fan to clear steam during and after bathing or showering

### General

- Keep your home as warm as you can — raising the temperature will prevent condensation from forming
- The Energy Saving Trust recommends heating your home to between 18 to 21 degrees Celsius during winter. The World Health Organisation (WHO) suggests 18 degrees is the ideal temperature for healthy people
- Insulate — use draught excluders to block cold air where possible
- Wipe down surfaces to stop mould from growing
- Keep furniture away from external walls and radiators
- Open windows where possible
- Don't block vents
- Dry your clothes outside if possible
- Don't overfill your cupboards or wardrobes

**Not striking the right balance between ventilation, heat, and moisture can lead to several possibilities in your home, including dampness and mould. It's essential to understand what these factors are and how they can affect your health.**

### **What's the difference between damp and mould?**

To identify and report damp and mould, we'd like to help you understand the difference between the two.

### **What is damp?**

When moisture builds up in your home, it affects building materials like walls, floors, ceilings, foundations, and home furnishings. If left untreated, these damp conditions can cause damage to your home and belongings, as well as the growth of mould and other microorganisms. Damp comes in many forms, these include:

- **Condensation damp** — is the most common form of dampness. It's created when moisture generated inside the home cools and begins to gather on colder surfaces (like window frames and behind sofas or wardrobes).
- **Penetrating damp** — is created when external water gets into the building through defects in the walls, roofs, windows, or floors.
- **Rising damp** — is created when moisture from the ground rises through parts of the building in contact with the ground (like walls and floors). It can be found in homes where there is no damp course or where the damp proof course is faulty, allowing moisture in to the property.
- **Traumatic damp** — can be caused by leaking water from waste and heating pipes, overflowing baths or sinks, burst pipes or defective water storage vessels inside the building. Traumatic damp can also develop through sources outside of your home, like connected buildings and environmental flooding.

## What is mould?

Mould is a general term for any fungus that grows on food or damp building materials. It typically looks like a stain and comes in a range of colours. However, mould may not be visible in all cases but can cause a musty odour in the home or on items.

If allowed to grow, mould can contribute to poor indoor air quality and even worsen some health conditions. The NHS advises that people living in mouldy and damp homes are more likely to have breathing problems and infections and suffer from asthma and allergies. Babies, children, and older people are particularly vulnerable to these illnesses. At the same time, those with existing skin and respiratory conditions or a weakened immune system are also considered high-risk categories.

Washing, cooking, air humidifiers, poor ventilation, condensation, and leaks from outside can all contribute to mould growth within your home.

**Important: If you live in a home with damp or mould and you or a loved one begins to have symptoms, including a cough, wheezing or shortness of breath, please consult a healthcare professional.**





## Cleaning mould

The government advice now suggests that regular cleaning away of the mould is vital for your health. Cleaning out mould is one of the first things we will arrange to do if you report mould in your home.

You can also safely remove small amounts of mould caused by condensation regularly. To do so, wipe down the affected walls and window frames with a preparatory mouldcide or fungicidal spray. These products can be found at your chemist and some retailers. You can also purchase mould kits from specialist suppliers. Remember to read and follow the manufacturer's instructions to ensure the product is suitable and to wear the recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) to avoid personal injury or damage to possessions. If you don't think you can clean away small amounts of mould regularly, please let us know.

## Handy tips

Once the mould has been safely cleaned up, here are some tips to follow to ensure it doesn't return:

- Clean any clothes affected by the damp
- Shampoo and dry your carpets
- Avoid disturbing and spreading the mould spores by brushing or vacuum cleaning
- Following treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to prevent mould
- Don't over-coat with ordinary paint, emulsion, or wallpaper. Use a mouldcide solution additive to mix with the paint, or wallpaper paste containing a fungicide
- Using a dehumidifier will help control the airborne moisture and help reduce the problem. However, dehumidifiers will not solve the cause of the condensation problem.







## How can we support you

Touchstone and your landlord have a duty of care to all our Customers. If an unresolved repair in your home causes a damp or mould issue or is affecting your health or safety, it's our responsibility to fix it. We will also let you know what we can do to repair and decorate the affected area.

For us to maintain our responsibilities, it's important that you:

- Report any repairs needed to your home
- Report any changes in your health due to the issue
- Report any damage caused by any damp or mould.

In turn, we will:

- Organise an inspection and clean of the area affected by damp and mould
- Carry out repairs within a reasonable time. Some common problems we must fix include:
  - Leaking internal pipes
  - Broken heating systems
  - Missing roof tiles or faulty guttering
  - Cracked walls or rotten window frames.

If you notice a case of damp or mould in your home, you can report the issue through the Residently App or by calling **01225 838490** or, for homes managed by our Edinburgh office, **0131 657 5139**

## What can you expect when reporting damp and mould

It's important to understand the process when reporting a case of damp and mould within your home. To help, we've outlined the steps you can expect below.



### Book an appointment

If you spot damp or mould in your home, the first step is to report the issue and book an appointment to resolve the problem.

You can do this by reporting a repair on the Residently app or by calling **01225 838 490** or for homes managed by our Edinburgh office, **0131 657 5139**.

### How long should you wait for an appointment?

We take cases of damp and mould very seriously, as it can affect your health and the quality of our homes. We aim to provide our customers with an appointment within five working days of the report. Please keep in mind that this may vary during times of high demand, and rest assured that we'll do what we can to resolve your issue as quickly as possible.



### **What to expect during your appointment**

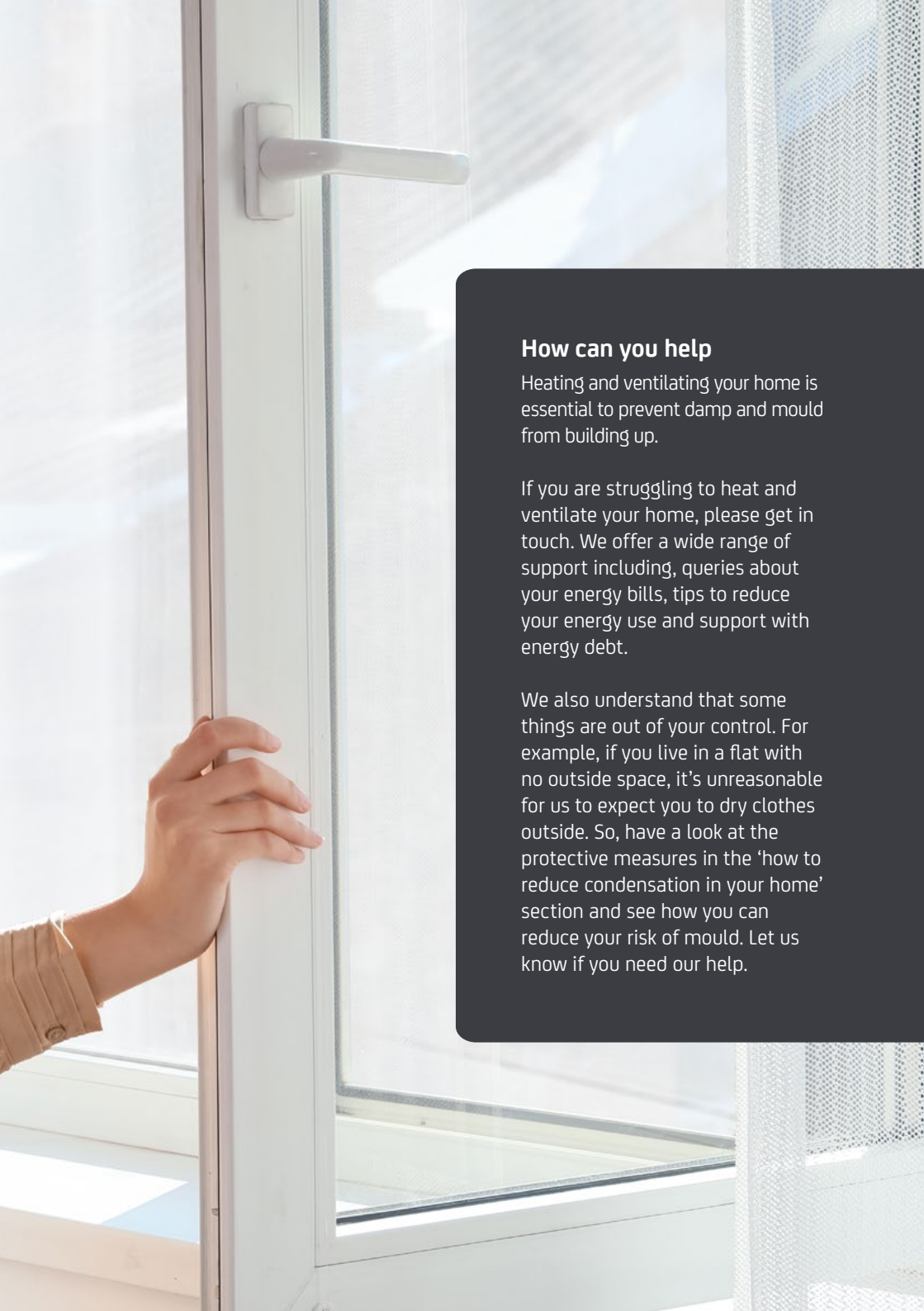
During your appointment, our friendly experts will inspect the site where the damp and mould is present, clean the area with the appropriate products and remove any residue that might have been affected. We will also paint any walls affected by the problem with specially formulated paint to prevent dampness from reappearing. Please keep in mind that the painting stage of the process may require a follow up visit to complete.



### **What action can you take if you feel reporting of mould is not being adequately addressed?**

You can contact your local Environmental Health Office (EHO) for an independent report to be completed on the property condition. This report will outline what actions, if any, your landlord ought to undertake at the property in question.





## How can you help

Heating and ventilating your home is essential to prevent damp and mould from building up.

If you are struggling to heat and ventilate your home, please get in touch. We offer a wide range of support including, queries about your energy bills, tips to reduce your energy use and support with energy debt.

We also understand that some things are out of your control. For example, if you live in a flat with no outside space, it's unreasonable for us to expect you to dry clothes outside. So, have a look at the protective measures in the 'how to reduce condensation in your home' section and see how you can reduce your risk of mould. Let us know if you need our help.



## **If you are struggling with the impact of increasing costs, you can reach out in a number of ways.**

You can contact our team on **01225 838490** or, for our homes managed by our Edinburgh office, **0131 657 5139**.

For more information:

**[www.touchstoneresi.co.uk](http://www.touchstoneresi.co.uk)**

When you call, please have your property reference number, house number or postcode ready.