

## Damp & Mould Fact Sheet

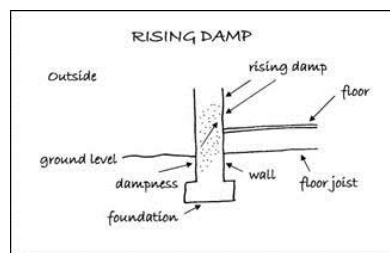
### Types of Dampness

There are four main types of dampness that could affect your home. It is essential that you take the time to identify the true cause of dampness in your property so that you can diagnose the correct solution.

#### 1. Rising damp

This is caused by water from the ground rising into the home by penetrating or bypassing a defective damp proof course (DPC). Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms, up to a height of 12 to 18 inches (300mm to 450mm). It will be seen all year round (usually as a 'tide mark' low down on the wall) but is more noticeable in winter. If left untreated it will lead to crumbling wall plaster in that area and lifting wallpaper.

*N.B. Black mould will rarely be seen on rising damp (and then only in the early stages) because this type of dampness carries with it ground salts which are poisonous to black mould.*



#### 2. Penetrating dampness

This type of dampness will only occur on external walls. It will only appear because of a defect outside the home, such as leaking eaves gutters or down pipes, which permits water to pass from the outside to the inside. This type of dampness is far more noticeable following a period of rainfall. The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch.

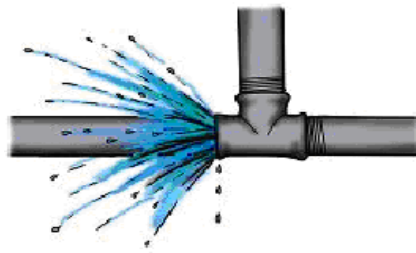
*N.B. Black mould is rarely seen on penetrating dampness (and then only in the early stages) because the area is usually too wet and the dampness contains salts, picked up from the wall it has just passed through, which are poisonous to black mould.*



### 3. Defective plumbing

Leaks from water and waste pipes, especially in bathrooms and kitchens, are relatively common. They can affect both internal and external walls and ceilings. The area looks and feels damp to the touch and remains damp whatever the weather conditions outside. A quick examination of the water (and waste) pipes serving the kitchen and bathroom will usually find the problem.

*N.B. Black mould will rarely be seen on this type of dampness because the area is usually too wet and the chemicals in a waste water leak will be poisonous to mould.*



### 4. Condensation

This is by far the most common cause of dampness, accounting for over 90% of all enquiries or complaints to the Council concerning dampness. Condensation is caused by water moisture from inside the dwelling coming into contact with a colder surface, such as a window or wall. The water drops (or condensation) may then soak into the wallpaper or paintwork or even plasterwork and attract black mould to grow on its surface.

Condensation mainly occurs during the colder months, whether it is rainy or dry outside, and is usually found in corners and north facing walls, on or near windows; also in areas of little air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls.

*N.B. Black mould is frequently seen on this type of dampness.*



If you feel the dampness and/or mould growth is caused by condensation, there are a number of steps you can take to alleviate the problem. Cooking, washing, drying clothes indoors, even breathing, all produce water vapour which can only be seen when tiny drops of water (or condensation) appears on colder surfaces such as walls, windows and ceilings.

The 'amount' of condensation in a home depends upon how much water vapour is produced by the actions of its residents and how cold or warm the property is. Condensation is usually less likely in the warmer months or when the property is adequately heated and ventilated.

Usually the first indication of a condensation problem is water vapour condensing on windows and other cold surfaces. The second indication is black mould patches growing on surfaces.

### **Warmth versus ventilation**

It is very important to strike a balance between warmth and ventilation.

By opening windows (in association with the other tips to reduce moisture) it may appear that you are losing heat, but what you are actually doing is allowing warm moisture-laden air to escape and permitting cool dry air to enter your home. Dry cool air is actually cheaper to heat than warm moist air! So this actually saves you money, as well as resulting in a healthier living environment.

### **Dealing with mould growth**

Black mould growth on walls, ceilings, furnishings and even on clothes and toys can be depressing and expensive. To kill and remove the mould wipe down the affected areas using a fungicidal wash or diluted bleach (always use rubbers gloves and wear glasses and follow manufacturer's instructions)).

## **Six Steps To Reduce Condensation**

### **1. Produce less moisture**

- Cover pans when cooking.
- Dry clothes outdoors in warm weather.
- Ventilate tumble driers to the outside.
- Do not use paraffin or liquid petroleum ('bottled') gas heaters. They produce masses of water vapour and are very expensive to run.

## **2. Ventilate to remove moisture**

- Always ventilate, or open a window when the kitchen and/or bathroom are in use and close other internal doors so as to prevent moisture-laden air from spreading to other parts of the dwelling.
- Continue to ventilate for a time after a shower, a bath or cooking.
- Ventilate cupboards, wardrobes and (with blocked up fireplaces) chimney flues.
- Always open bedroom windows (for up to one hour) as soon as you arise, and throw back the sheets or duvets to air the bed and bedding.
- Clear window sills of clutter that will impede window opening.

## **3. Wipe away excess moisture**

Always wipe the windows (and window sills if appropriate) of your home, every morning, to remove condensation. This is especially important in the bedroom; just opening the window is not good enough. Also, pull back the sheets or duvets to air the bed.

## **5. Keep your home adequately heated**

If possible, keep low background heat on all day, even in the bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom.

## **6. Above all remember**

Dealing with condensation is not easy. Most people see moisture (or more usually, black mould) and automatically assume it has come inside their home from outside; it hasn't! Only carrying out one or two of the above steps will not help your problem. You must do as many as possible every day, so that it becomes part of your living and lifestyle. You must help yourself.

## **How To Combat Dampness**

Having read this leaflet, if you feel your dampness is due to rising damp, penetrating damp or from defective plumbing then you should advise your landlord in writing and allow them time to remedy the problem. If your landlord does not respond to your request then you can report it to Environmental Health by telephoning 396396 or email [heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk](mailto:heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk).

If the dampness is due to condensation, Environmental Health can only take action if

- You have inadequate heating
- You cannot open your windows
- The damp and mould is very severe.

## Examples where the council have taken action



## Examples where the council were unable to take action

Properties were adequately heated and ventilated, condensation was due to tenant's lifestyle and where the mould has not been cleaned off the surfaces.

