4. In houses, the rooms above a heated living room benefit to some extent from heat rising through the floor. In bungalows and in most flats this does not happen. Some rooms are especially cold because they have a lot of outside walls or lose heat through a roof as well as walls. Such rooms are most likely to have condensation and some heating is therefore necessary. Even in a well insulated house and with reasonable ventilation it is likely to be necessary during cold weather to maintain all rooms at not less than 10°C in order to avoid condensation. When living rooms are in use their temperature should be raised to about 20°C.

Mould growth and treatment

Any sign of mould growth is an indication of the presence of moisture and if caused by condensation gives warning that heating, structural insulation or ventilation, or all three, may require improvement.

Treating the cause of the mould, i.e. the condensation should prevent it from coming back, however there are some additional steps that you can take:

- Wipe down the walls with a fungicidal wash which carries a Health and Safety Executive 'Approval Number'. Follow the manufacturers instructions carefully.
- Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets (try not to vacuum as this may spread mould spores).
- Re-decorate using a good quality fungicidal paint (wallpaper and normal paints painted over the fungicidal paint may reduce its effectiveness).

New Buildings

New buildings can take a long time before they are fully dried out. While this is happening they need extra heat and ventilation. At least during the first winter of use may houses require more heat than they will need in subsequent winters. Allowance should be made for this. It is important that wet construction should be free to dry out. In some forms of construction especially flat roofs of concrete, final drying may only be able to take place inwards. Ceiling finishes which would prevent such drying out should not be added unless expert advice has been given that this would not matter.

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Condensation

Housing

Condensation

If your home suffers from condensation, you may experience damp and sometimes visually unpleasant discoloured areas on your walls and ceilings as a result of mould growing on the surfaces. Often the condensation is most evident in the lower corners of rooms, where it is often confused with rising damp.

What conditions lead to condensation?

Condensation is water contained within the air, which converts (or condenses) from being a gas to a liquid when the air in the room comes into contact with a cold surface such as a wall or window glass. The amount of condensation that is generated depends upon how moist the air is and how cold the surfaces of rooms are.

Often, condensation is short lived – such as that which occurs in bathrooms and kitchens because of the steamy atmosphere

Longer-term condensation can however arise in unheated rooms where air movement is restricted.

These factors are largely controlled by the activities of the occupier and the way in which the house or flat is constructed.

The effect of condensation may also be more pronounced in winter, because the building structure is cold and because windows are not opened as frequently and the moist air cannot escape.

Preventing Condensation

Reduce the moisture content of the air

1. Good ventilation of kitchens when washing or drying clothes or cooking is essential. If there is an electric extractor fan, use it when cooking, or washing clothes, and particularly whenever the windows show any sign of misting. Leave the fan on until misting has cleared.

2. If there is not an extractor fan, open the kitchen windows, but keep the door closed as much as possible.

3. After bathing, keep the bathroom window open, and shut the door for long enough to dry off the room.

4. In other rooms provide some ventilation. In old houses a lot of ventilation occurs through fireplace flues and draughty windows. In modern flats and houses sufficient ventilation does not occur unless a window or ventilator is open for a reasonable time each day and for nearly all the time a room is in use. Too much ventilation in cold weather is uncomfortable and wastes heat. All that is needed is a very slightly opened window or ventilator. Where there is a choice, open the upper part, such as top-hung window. About 10mm opening will usually be sufficient.

5. Avoid the use of portable paraffin or flue-less gas heaters as far as possible. This is because each litre of oil used about a litre of liquid water in the form of water vapour. If these heaters must be used, make sure the room they are in is well ventilated.

6. If condensation occurs in a room that has a gas, oil, or solid fuel heating appliance with a flue, the heating installation should be checked - the condensation may have appeared because the appliance flue has become blocked.

7. Do not use unventilated airing cupboards for clothes drying.

8. If washing is dried in a bathroom or kitchen, open a window, or turn on the extractor fan enough to ventilate the room. It may also be a good idea to close the door of that room so that moist air cannot easily spread to other rooms.

Provide reasonable heating

1. Try to make sure that all rooms are at least partially heated. Condensation most often occurs in unheated bedrooms.

2. To prevent condensation, the heat has to keep room surfaces reasonably warm. It takes a long time for a cold building structure to warm up, so it is better to have a small amount of heat for a long period than a lot of heat for a short time.

3. Houses and flats left unoccupied and unheated during the day get very cold. Whenever possible, it is best to keep heating on, even if at a low level.