Avoiding condensation dampness

Condensation dampness is a condition that affects millions of homes within the UK, and is worse through the winter months. This can lead to mould spots appearing on surfaces.

What is condensation?

All air contains a certain amount of 'invisible' water vapour. The higher the temperature of the air the more water vapour it can hold. Condensation frequently occurs when air carrying vapour comes into contact with a cool surface. At this reduced temperature less water can be held so it is then deposited. It is for this reason that the bathroom mirror steams up after a shower or on a window when you breathe on it.

Where does condensation dampness occur?

The most vulnerable areas will either be rooms where a large amount of moisture is produced, i.e. bathroom/kitchen, or on cold surfaces in other rooms where the moisture can travel to. The effects of this process may be visible, for example droplets of water on gloss painted windowsill's, but often the water droplets will soak into the wall and a problem will not be diagnosed until black patches start to appear.

The following areas are particularly prone to condensation:

- Cold surfaces, such as mirrors, single glazed windows and metal window frames.
- Kitchens and bathrooms.
- Walls of unheated rooms.
- Cold corners of rooms.
- Wardrobes/cupboards and behind furniture against an outside wall.

How to tackle condensation dampness.

The major difference between condensation and other forms of dampness is that **you** have the ability to reduce or solve the problem just through changing behaviour in the house. **Try these following steps:**

- **Reduce the moisture:** Normal activities such as bathing, washing, and cooking all produce moisture which cannot be avoided. Simple changes however can prove effective in tackling condensation dampness. Steps to consider are:

1 – Keep lids on saucepans while cooking.
2 – Tumble driers should be vented to the outside.
3 – Avoid the use of bottled gas and paraffin heaters as these produce high levels of vapour.
4 – Dry washing outside when possible.

5 – Open windows to allow the steam to escape, preventing it from spreading the house.

- **Increase ventilation:** This is required so that moist air produced can escape, simply opening a window will do. A suitable level of ventilation will allow this without making occupants uncomfortable by causing draughts and making the room cold. It may be quite difficult to strike the right balance.

- **Heating:** Condensation is most likely to be a problem in homes which are under heated. Try to keep temperatures in all rooms above 15oC as this will reduce the condensation forming on external walls.