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**HEALTHY HOMES**  
NEIL MARSDEN

Condensation  
and mould in  
your home...

**A guide to the  
cause and how  
to remedy the  
problem.**





# HEALTHY HOMES

## NEIL MARSDEN



Condensation and mould are the most common forms of unwanted moisture found in buildings.

They have become increasingly prevalent due to modern living habits. Everyday activities - such as cooking, bathing, showering, drying clothes indoors, and even breathing - release significant amounts of moisture into the air within our homes.

This guide is designed to help you identify whether condensation is affecting your property and to offer practical steps for reducing or managing the issue.

While we always recommend arranging an inspection with one of our specialist surveyors for a full assessment, we hope this guide gives you a clearer understanding of the problems you may be experiencing.

## What does condensation look like?



Although mould growth is often linked to condensation, condensation itself does not need to be present for mould to develop.

Consistently high levels of humidity are enough to create the conditions in which mould can thrive. We'll explore this in more detail later in the guide.



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## What are the signs of condensation and mould?

- Water on the inside of windows
- Water running down walls
- Black Spot Mould
- Fungal growths within wardrobes, on clothes or furniture
- Musty Smell (this is caused by the fungus that accompanies the condensation)
- Bedding feeling damp/cold
- Feeling like you have a cold when you get out of bed
- Dampness/mould growths commonly found in corners, near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards

***“Condensation itself does not need to be present for mould to develop.”***

You are most likely to find mould in colder areas of the home or in places where ventilation is limited. Common locations include room corners, behind beds, sofas, or wardrobes, inside wardrobes (sometimes on clothing), and on external walls.

Mould can also appear where ceilings meet walls, as loft insulation does not always extend fully to the edges, creating cold spots around the room's perimeter. Additionally, window and door frames are frequent problem areas due to colder surfaces and reduced airflow.

## Mould Cleaning

Cleaning away mould is important, but doing it incorrectly can make the problem worse. Many water-based sprays keep surfaces damp for longer, creating ideal conditions for mould to return. This means that, although they may offer a short-term fix, excessive or inappropriate cleaning can actually worsen the issue over time.

Avoid using bleach, as it can irritate surfaces, does not fully penetrate porous materials, and often fails to prevent mould from re-growing. Mildewed clothing should be dry-cleaned, and carpets affected by mould should be professionally shampooed.

Ultimately, the most effective way to prevent mould is to reduce the amount of moisture in your home. Cleaning alone will not solve the underlying problem, and mould will usually reappear unless the cause of the moisture is addressed.



## Is condensation and mould bad for your health?

One of the most common concerns raised is whether mould can lead to health problems. Black spot mould, in particular, has gained a reputation for being especially hazardous.

In reality, all homes contain billions of mould spores, and every person inhales hundreds of thousands of these spores each day—no matter where they live. Despite common belief, there is currently no strong evidence to suggest that everyday exposure to low levels of indoor mould poses a serious health risk to the general public.

However, high or prolonged exposure can contribute to health issues, particularly for individuals who are already vulnerable, such as those with asthma, respiratory conditions, or weakened immune systems.

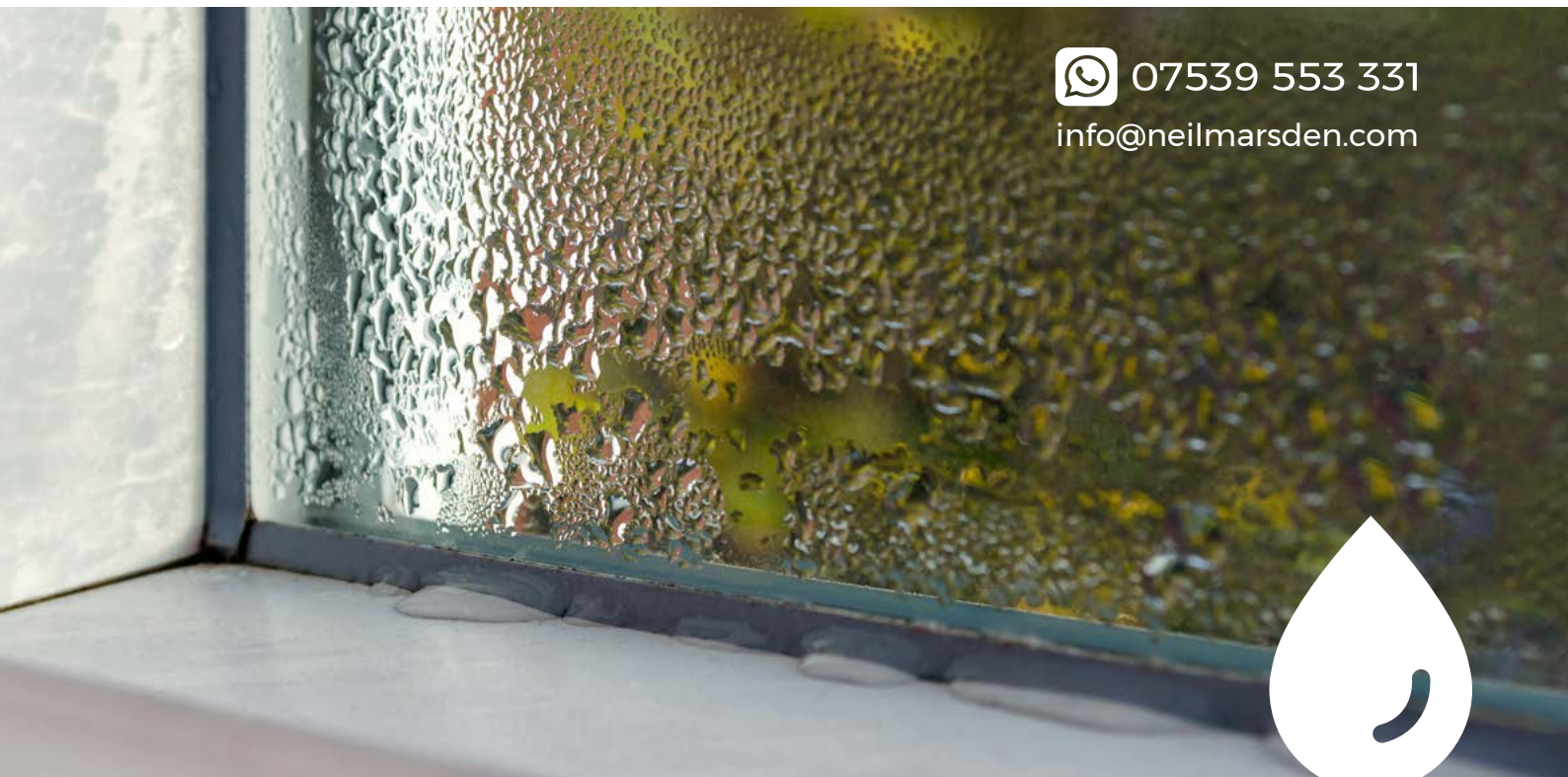
Both the *World Health Organization (WHO)* and *the Institute of Medicine (IOM)* recognise a link between damp living conditions and certain adverse health effects. Their guidance emphasises the importance of reducing indoor moisture levels and improving ventilation to minimise potential risks.

# Brief mechanics of condensation and mould

Condensation and mould are the result of an imbalance within your home's internal environment. Several key factors contribute to this:

- Moisture production
- Ventilation
- Heating
- Surface temperature
- Insulation

**If mould is present, it indicates that one or more of these factors are not working as they should.**

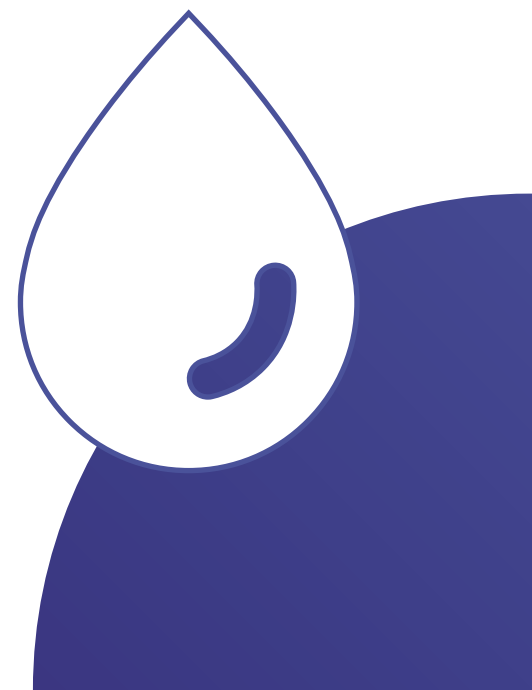


## How condensation forms

Condensation occurs when warm, humid air meets a cold surface. At this point, the relative humidity reaches 100%, and moisture settles as water droplets. While this is a common trigger for mould, it's important to note that mould can develop before humidity reaches 100%.

Humidity levels play a major role in how quickly mould can form:

- Above 65% RH – mould may develop in around 1 month
- Above 75% RH – mould may develop in around 1 week
- Above 85% RH – mould may develop in as little as 1 day





## Checking humidity levels

If you're unsure about the moisture levels in your home, you can monitor them yourself. Affordable humidity meters are available online or from most DIY stores. Track the readings over time to understand the conditions within your property. Ideally, your indoor humidity should average below 65%.

## Should a home cope with normal moisture levels?



A domestic property should be capable of handling the moisture produced by normal day-to-day living - such as cooking, showering, cleaning, and having a couple of pets. This assumes the home is not overcrowded and no excessive moisture sources are present (e.g., bottled gas heaters or un-vented tumble dryers).

If you are living a typical lifestyle and not producing excessive moisture, yet mould still appears, it suggests there is an underlying issue with the property. In these situations, the home is simply not coping as it should.



## Simple ways to reduce condensation and mould

There are several practical steps you can take to lower moisture levels and reduce the risk of condensation and mould in your home:



- Avoid drying laundry on radiators or indoor airers. If you need to, ensure the area is well ventilated. Using a small dehumidifier can help, or place the ailer in the bathroom with the door closed and the extractor fan running.
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed during use and open a window where possible. This prevents moisture from spreading to other rooms.
- Ensure tumble dryers are properly vented to an external wall or through an open window.
- Use pan lids when cooking and switch on your kitchen extractor fan if you have one.
- Always run extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom whenever moisture is present. Leave them on for a good amount of time after cooking, bathing, or showering to remove as much moisture as possible.
- Maintain a 10mm ventilation gap under internal doors to allow airflow throughout the property.
- Position furniture against internal walls where possible. External walls are colder, so leaving a larger gap helps air circulate and prevents cold spots.
- Avoid cluttering spaces. Overfilled wardrobes, cupboards, and piles of clothing trap moisture and restrict airflow, increasing mould risk.
- Provide consistent, moderate heating throughout your home. Warmer air and surfaces reduce the likelihood of condensation forming.
- Avoid using bottled gas heaters (e.g., Calor gas) as they release significant moisture—around 8 pints per average-sized cylinder.



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## What do I do next?

It is usually necessary to tackle a condensation problem in stages.

**1.** If you are unsure whether humidity is contributing to your condensation or mould problem, we recommend starting by purchasing a small hygrometer. These are inexpensive and widely available both in local stores and online. A hygrometer allows you to monitor the Relative Humidity (RH) inside your home.

Ideally, your RH should remain below 65%, as anything above this creates conditions where mould can begin to grow. Record the humidity at several points throughout the day so you can understand how levels change and assess whether the control measures you implement later are making a difference.

However, if mould is already present, this is a clear visual indicator that the humidity or environment is not balanced, and you will likely need to move on to the next stage of the process.

**2.** Follow the recommendations provided in this guide. Simple lifestyle adjustments can often lead to noticeable improvements in reducing condensation and managing humidity levels. However, in many cases, additional measures—such as improving insulation or ventilation—will still be necessary to fully resolve the issue.

**3.** Arrange for a diagnostic survey to be carried out. This assessment will help identify any issues with insulation, ventilation, or other building defects that may be contributing to condensation and mould. The survey will also evaluate how well your current ventilation systems are performing and highlight any areas where upgrades or improvements are needed.

**4.** Give the improvements time to take effect and continue monitoring conditions within your home. Once moisture levels have stabilised, identify any remaining localised issues. These areas may require more targeted solutions, such as additional insulation or improved airflow to address persistent cold spots or humidity build-up.



## Don't...

- Carry out any work you are unsure about. Attempting repairs without the right knowledge can lead to unnecessary costs. Be cautious of anyone offering a “free inspection”—these are often used as a way to generate work rather than provide impartial advice.
- Agree to major repairs without proper confirmation. If you've been told you need a new roof, new windows, a new door, or any other large-scale work, make sure you get a reliable assessment first. Otherwise, you may end up spending money on work that isn't needed.
- Rely on unverified information online. The internet is full of misleading or incorrect advice from unqualified sources. For accurate guidance, always consult a trained professional or specialist.



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## HEALTHY HOMES NEIL MARSDEN

### What Does a Survey Involve?

While lifestyle changes—such as those outlined in this guide—can make a noticeable difference, it is crucial to correctly diagnose the underlying issues before investing in further measures like ventilation upgrades or additional insulation.

We offer comprehensive property surveys that assess the cause of condensation and mould problems. Following the inspection, you will receive a detailed report explaining the source of the issue and outlining the recommended remedial actions.

### Why Should You Have a Survey?

- Independent, unbiased advice
- We do not quote for or carry out remedial works. This means our recommendations are based solely on what your property genuinely needs—not on sales targets. You are free to use your own contractor with full confidence in the advice provided.
- Avoid unnecessary spending
- Many homeowners pay for new roofs, windows, pointing, guttering and more, only to find the problem still persists. A survey removes the guesswork, ensuring you address the real cause and get it right the first time.
- Protect your home and belongings
- The damage caused by ongoing condensation and mould—such as ruined furniture, clothing, or decoration—can easily exceed the cost of a professional survey.
- Understand your property better
- A survey gives you valuable insight into how your home performs and helps you ensure it remains a safe, healthy environment for you and your family.

## What Our Survey Includes

Our surveys provide a thorough, evidence-based assessment of your property. Each inspection includes:

- A calculated assessment and accurate diagnosis of the issue – no guesswork.
- Relative humidity, temperature, and dew point measurements to understand moisture conditions.
- Wall surface temperature readings to identify cold spots.
- Thermal imaging to detect insulation problems or hidden building defects.
- An evaluation of your existing ventilation systems to determine performance levels.
- A calculation of the ventilation your property requires, along with tailored recommendations to help you achieve effective ventilation and insulation.
- A full written report, detailing all findings and suggested remedial actions.

Survey fees vary depending on location, property size, and type. For more information, feel free to contact us via our social media pages or email [info@neilmarsden.com](mailto:info@neilmarsden.com). If you can, send photos of the affected areas so we can ensure you receive the most appropriate type of survey.

All of our surveyors are CSRT qualified, ensuring a professional and knowledgeable service.



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# Frequently Asked Questions

## Could I have rising damp?

While rising damp cannot be completely ruled out without inspection, the presence of mould almost always indicates condensation or high humidity, not rising damp. Mould rarely grows on groundwater from rising damp, meaning it typically won't appear on clothing, wardrobes, or other furniture. If mould is present on indoor surfaces, high humidity is the more likely cause.

## We open our windows all the time. Why do we still have a problem?

Opening windows alone is not a long-term solution. It can help briefly after generating moisture—such as during cooking or after a bath or shower—but it does not reduce humidity enough to prevent mould growth over time. Controlled ventilation, such as extractor fans, is far more effective.

## Our walls are freezing. Is this causing the issue?

Cold walls are a common cause of condensation. Increasing ventilation is the best first step, as this may be enough to keep moisture under control. However, if cold surfaces continue to attract condensation, insulation improvements may be needed later.

## Can cavity wall insulation cause damp problems?

When installed correctly, cavity wall insulation should not cause damp. However, it reduces natural ventilation within the property. For this reason, adequate mechanical ventilation—such as good-quality extractor fans—is essential to prevent moisture build-up after installation.

## I've lived in the property for years and the problem has only just started. Why?

New or worsening condensation issues are usually linked to changes in lifestyle or alterations to the home. Common triggers include:

- Working from home more often (especially since COVID), increasing time indoors
- New windows or insulation making the home more airtight
- The arrival of a baby (more baths, laundry, boiled kettles)
- New pets
- Changes in occupancy

These all increase indoor moisture levels, making mould more likely.

## Should I accept that I just have to live with mould?

Absolutely not. Persistent mould simply means the underlying issue has not yet been identified or resolved. Once the root cause is found and addressed—whether ventilation, insulation, or moisture production—mould can be fully prevented. No one should have to live with mould.

