SIDEY

Your Guide to Condensation

Why it happens and what to do about it

Condensation generally occurs in the atmosphere when warm air rises, cools and looses its capacity to hold water vapor

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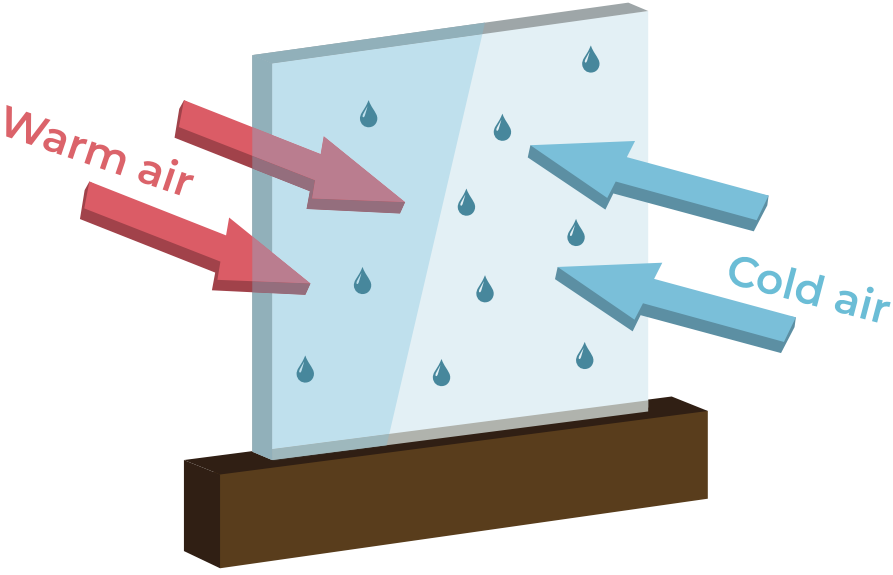
What is Condensation?

We all know that appearance of droplets of water on the outside (or inside) of a windowpane is called condensation – but what exactly is condensation and what causes it?



Simply put, condensation is the process in which gas changes into a liquid when it touches a cooler surface – the opposite of evaporation.

All the air in our homes contains water vapour, and the warmer the air, the more water vapour it will hold.
When this air comes into contact with a colder surface, such as window glass, vapour from the atmosphere condenses into water and droplets appear. This temperature is known as the 'Dew Point'.

IMPORTANT FACT: Condensation can damage your property if not managed or avoided and it can contribute to various health conditions.

External Condensation

If you've got condensation on the outside of your windows, don't panic – it's not a bad thing!

Although there isn't much you can do to prevent external condensation, it's actually a good sign. It proves that your windows and doors are doing their job properly and keeping the cold outside.

External condensation is caused when the outside temperature of the glass is lower than the temperature inside. This occurs more frequently in Autumn and Winter as the cold nights draw in.
Not all the panes in the same window will necessarily be affected by the same amount of early morning condensation. The position of the window and nearby objects, such as trees and surrounding buildings, can affect the surface temperature of the glass in different places, meaning that some panes may suffer more than others.

In many cases, external condensation doesn't last long. A little bit of heat from the sun will warm the glass and the condensation will quickly disappear.

Internal Condensation

While condensation on the outside of your windows isn't anything to worry about, condensation on the inside definitely is! So it's a good idea to know how to deal with it and the best methods of prevention.

As previously explained, condensation occurs when warm air collides with cold surfaces or when there's too much humidity in your home. If you have cold spots on internal walls or ceilings, this can further increase the likelihood of condensation.

It's especially common in the cooler hours of the mornings and evenings, when your central heating system is **off** and your windows are closed.

While it's common to think that older houses, that are cold and draughty, are more likely to suffer with condensation and damp, it's just as common in modern buildings and well-insulated new build properties.

Why? Because as we improve airtightness and insulation of our buildings to make them more energy efficient, we reduce ventilation and limit the property's ability to 'breathe.'

TIP: Try and increase ventilation if you're cooking without an extractor fan, drying wet clothes inside or creating steam in the bathroom from showering.

What Should I Do?

There are three basic ways to control the problem of internal condensation - control humidity, increase ventilation and add insulation.

Here's our top tips:

1. Open at least one window in each room of your home for natural ventilation.
2. Draughtproof internal doors and keep them closed to prevent air transfer from the main moisture-producing rooms.
3. Ensure that bathrooms are properly ventilated and open a window when taking a shower.
4. Check for wall vents and ensure they are kept clear.
5. Fix extractor fans over cookers and other steam-producing equipment.
6. Wherever possible and practical, have radiators fitted under windows to keep the temperature of the internal glass at a reasonable level.
7. Always wipe away any moisture from windows, as if left untreated it can create unsightly black mould.

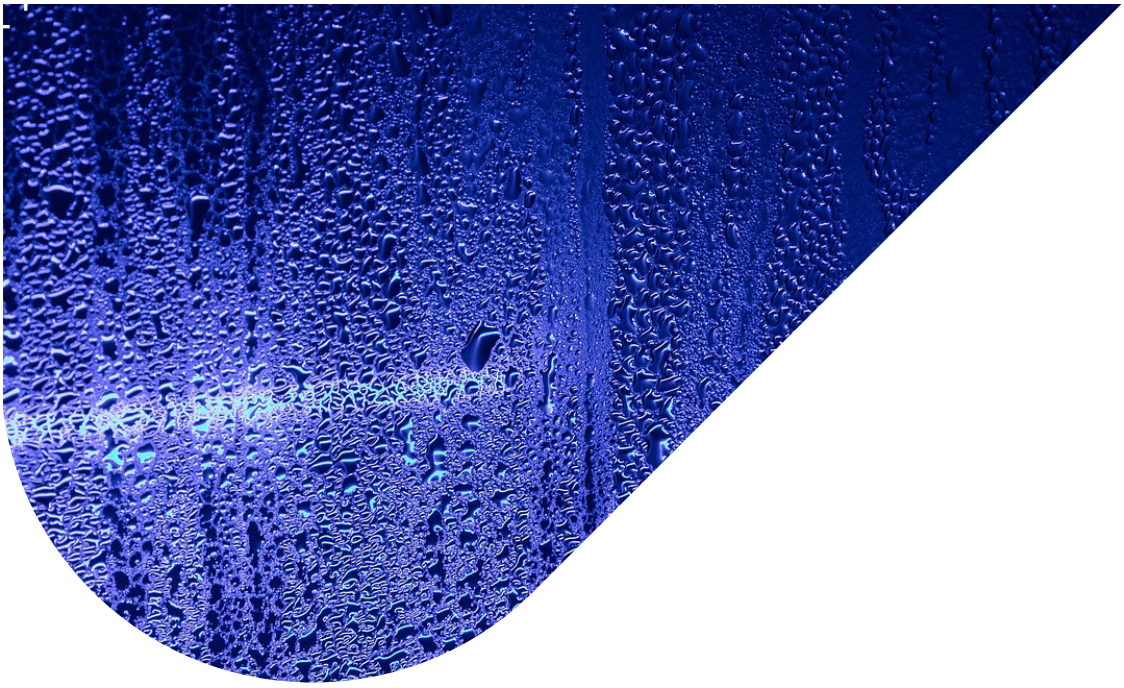
Reduce Condensation

If the condensation in your home is getting worse, then it could be time to think about replacing your windows, as this is a sign that the outside pane isn't protecting the internal pane from the cold.

In severe cases, water may drip down the window and puddle on cills.

By upgrading to modern, energy efficient windows, you will almost certainly solve the problem of internal condensation – especially if you've followed our top tips.

As condensation only forms on surfaces cooler than the surrounding air, this will be greatly reduced with triple glazing as the new window will retain heat and improve ventilation.



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TEL: 01738 634 803
EMAIL: info@sidey.co.uk
www.sidey.co.uk