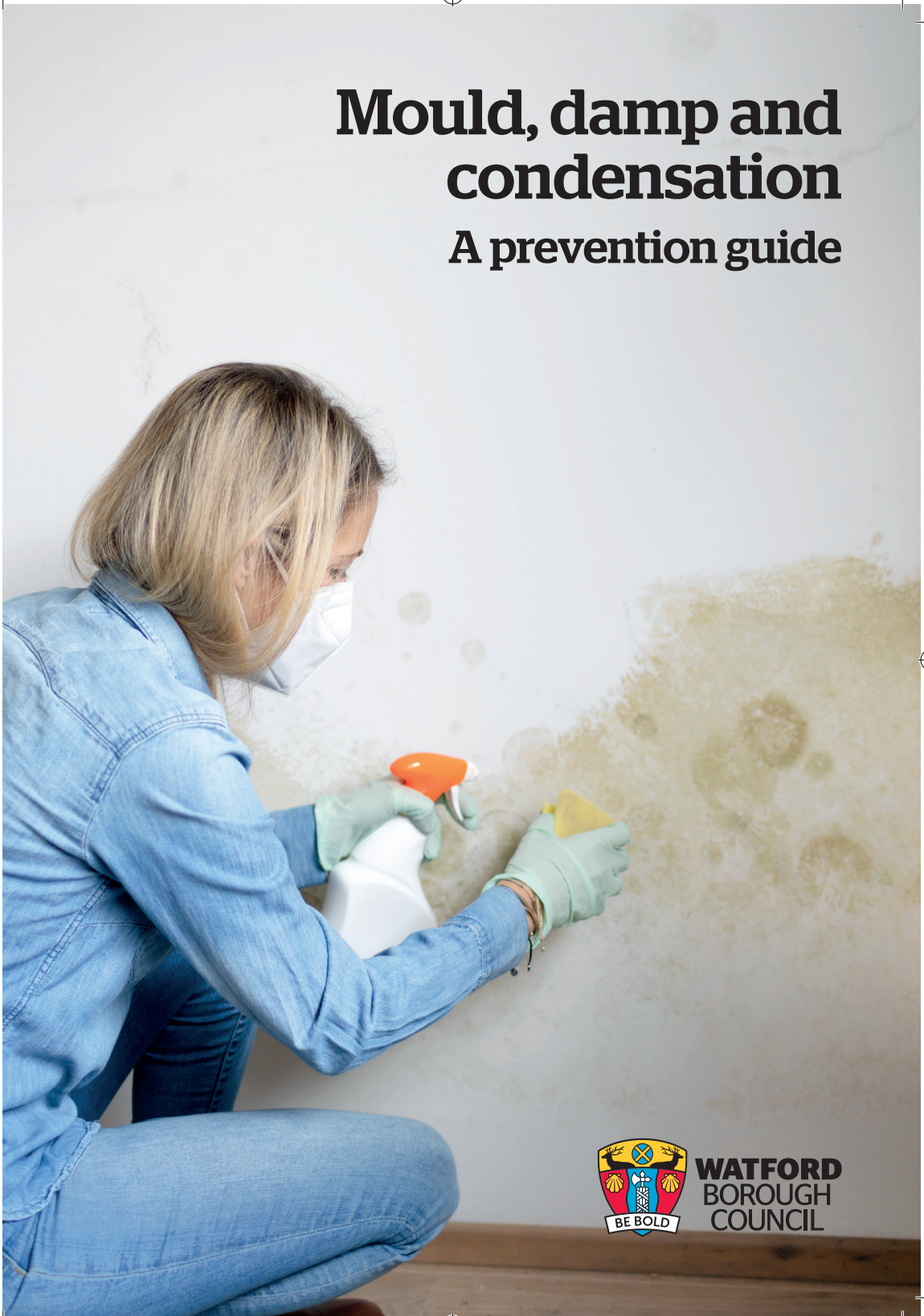
Mould, damp and condensation

A prevention guide



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Condensation and mould

What is condensation?

Condensation is the most common cause of damp in properties. It appears when moisture in the air comes into contact with a cold surface like a window or a cold wall.

We all get condensation on our windows from time to time. This isn't necessarily a problem if it clears up quickly. However, if left untreated, condensation can lead to mould growth on walls, ceilings and even furniture. It can also affect woodwork and plaster.

Condensation usually occurs in the colder months between September and April.

Where is condensation found?

Condensation is usually found in the corners of rooms, north facing walls, and on or near windows.

Condensation can also occur in areas where there is little air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls.

The amount of condensation in a home depends on:

- How much water vapour is produced
- How cold the property is
- How much ventilation there is in the house.

Where does moisture in the home come from?

Our everyday activities adds extra moisture to the air inside our homes. Even our breathing adds some moisture (remember breathing on cold windows and mirrors to fog them up?).

One person sleeping adds half a pint of water to the air overnight and at twice that rate when active during the day.

To give you some idea as to how much extra water this could be in a day, here are a few examples:

- Two people at home can produce 3 pints
- Having a bath or shower can produce 2 pints
- Drying clothes indoors can produce 9 pints
- Cooking and using a kettle can produce 6 pints
- Washing dishes can produce 2 pints
- Using a bottled gas heater for 8 hours can produce 4 pints

Tips to reduce condensation

Reduce Moisture

- Hang your washing outside to dry if possible, or hang clothes in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or extractor fan on.
- Always cook with pan lids on, and turn the heat down once the water has boiled. Only use the minimum amount of water for cooking vegetables.
- When filling your bath, run the cold water first then add the hot - it will reduce the steam by 90% which leads to condensation.
- If you use a tumble drier, make sure it is vented to the outside or that it is of the new condensing type.
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors when cooking or washing. Open a window or use an extractor fan to allow moisture to escape.
- It is also really important to wipe surfaces regularly where you can see moisture starting to form.

Improve ventilation

Ventilation can help to reduce condensation by removing moist air from your home and replacing it with drier air from outside.
This can be achieved by:

- Open windows regularly - especially when cooking or washing.
- Move furniture away from walls so air can circulate.
- Keep cupboards and wardrobes clutter free.

Heating your home

Try these ideas to improve the temperature of your home:

- If you don't have heating in every room, you could keep the doors of unheated rooms open to allow some heat into them.
- Try to keep your home heated to a temperature of at least 15c. It helps to provide a low heat all day.
- Avoid heaters that use bottled gas or paraffin as they produce lots of moisture.

Dealing with mould

- Don’t disturb mould by vacuuming or brushing it.
- Wipe down affected areas with an anti mould wash, following the instructions. Bleach is not recommended as it does not kill the mould.
- Use an anti mould paint or wallpaper paste after treatment. Don’t use ordinary paint on the affected area.
- Dry-clean clothes if you spot mould/mildew on them.
- Shampoo carpets that have mould on them.

Other types of damp

Rising damp

- Rising damp is caused by water rising from the ground into the home. The water gets through a broken damp proof course or the brickwork if a property was built without one.
- This type of damp only affects cellars and ground floor rooms and usually leaves a mark low down on the wall. We see more cases of this in winter.
- If left untreated, may cause wallpaper to lift and plaster to crumble.

Penetrating damp

- This type of damp is only found on external walls or, in the case of a roof leak, on ceilings.
- It appears because of an issue outside the home such as missing pointing to the brickwork, cracked rendering, broken rainwater pipes or broken/missing roof tiles.
- Normally appears as a well-defined patch and feels damp to the touch. It usually causes wallpaper to lift and paster to crumble.

Defective plumbing

- Caused by leaks from water and/or waste pipes.
- The affected area looks and feels damp.

Points to remember

To control condensation in your home remember the key points:

- Reduce the amount of moisture you produce.
- Seek to improve the ventilation in your home.
- Reduce the number of cold surfaces in your home.
- Maintain an adequate temperature throughout your home.
- Consider installing insulation, for example, cavity wall insulation.

Seeking advice

If you are a homeowner

Seek advice from a damp specialist if you have a problem with damp in your home.

If you are social tenant

Tenants in rental accommodation who think they have a problem with damp in their home should report this to their landlords.

If you a tenant in a private rental accommodation

Contact your landlord for advice on dealing with damp. In rented properties the council can get involved to ensure that repairs are carried out properly and in a reasonable timeframe.

Where the matter is still unresolved private tenants can seek advice from the council's Environmental Health team at **www.watford.gov.uk/private-homes/complain-rented-property/2**

You can contact the council's environmental health team on **01923 278607** or visit **www.watford.gov.uk** and complete the online form.

Further advice is found on our website at:

www.watford.gov.uk

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