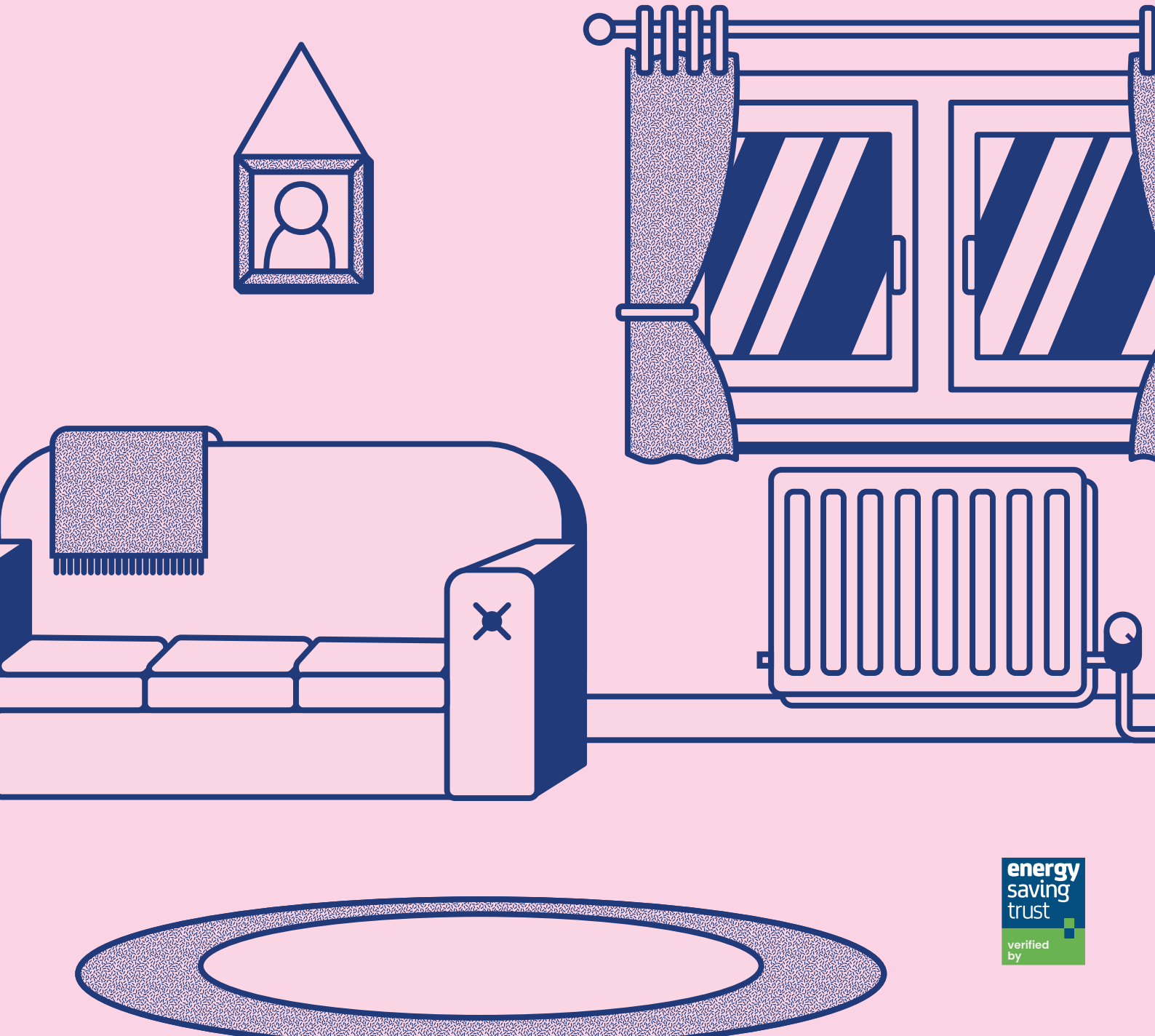
Brighter Places

The Healthy Home Handbook

A Resident's Guide to Condensation



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Introduction

All homes are at risk of condensation, particularly through the winter months. Excess condensation in your home can lead to problems such as mould growth, which can affect your health and the health of your home. Small amounts of condensation are not usually a problem, and there are some everyday things we can all do to help prevent it. That's why we have worked with Energy Saving Trust to create this handbook to share some practical advice to help you manage condensation and maintain a healthy home. We'll also share information on the different types of damp so that you can identify any potential concerns and how to let us know if there is a problem.

As your landlord, it's our responsibility to provide you with a safe and healthy home. If you spot any damp or mould in your home or following these tips does not help reduce excess condensation, let us know straight away.

We will arrange an inspection to identify the cause of any issues you are experiencing and work together to ensure any risks, hazards or problems are resolved as a priority.

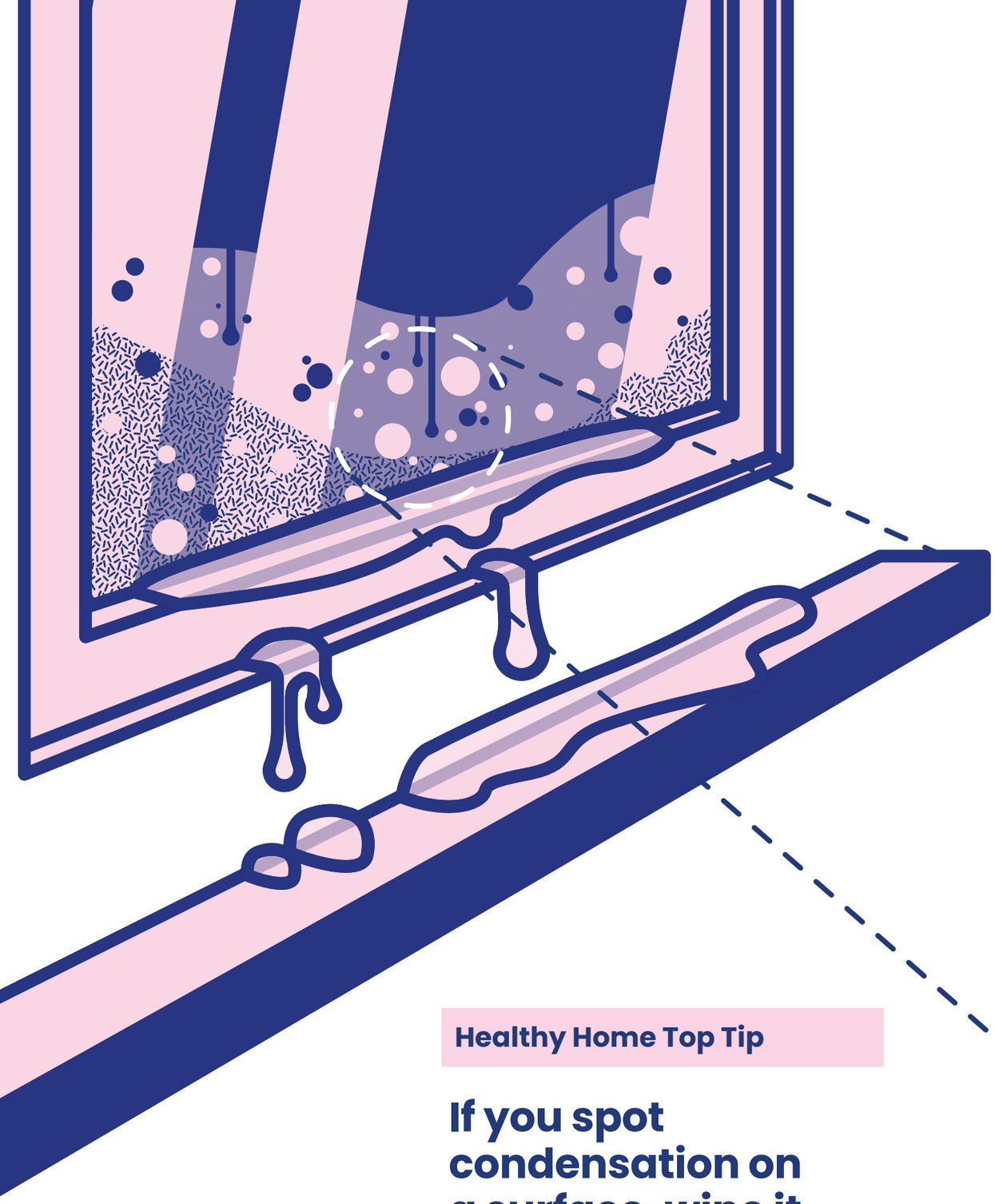
If you have any questions about this handbook or would like further advice about keeping a healthy and safe home, get in touch with us so that we can support you.

What is condensation?

Condensation happens when excess moisture in the air meets a cold surface and turns into water droplets. Everyday things like cooking, cleaning, showering, bathing and breathing produce excess moisture in our homes. Condensation is more likely to occur in winter; this is because surfaces like windows and walls are colder and there is more moist, warm air inside our homes.

We also tend to keep our windows and doors shut more in winter, meaning there is less ventilation to allow moist air to escape. Small amounts of condensation, like the steam from a shower condensing on a bathroom mirror, aren't usually a concern if it's kept on top of. If you spot condensation on a surface, wipe it down with a dry, clean cloth or kitchen towel.

If you are concerned about excess condensation in your home, contact us on 0117 942 4600.



Healthy Home Top Tip

If you spot condensation on a surface, wipe it down with a dry, clean cloth or towel.

What is damp?

Condensation is a type of damp that is caused by excess moisture inside the home, but there are other types of damp too, such as rising damp, penetrating damp and damp caused by plumbing faults. It's important to know how to spot these types of damp so that you can let us know if you have a problem and we can take action.

If you think you have rising damp, penetrating damp or a plumbing fault, contact us straight away so that we can arrange an inspection and take action to fix the problem.

Rising damp

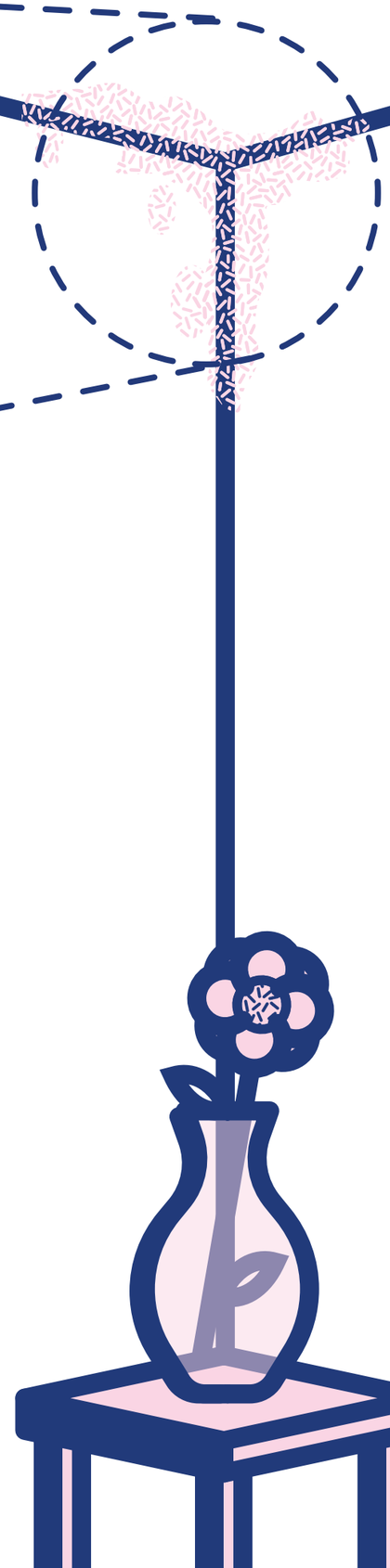
Rising damp is caused by water in the soil moving up through a wall and will only affect ground floor rooms or basements. It isn't very common and is usually prevented by a barrier called a damp-proof course. Rising damp can occur if the damp-proof course in your home is either missing or damaged. Signs of rising damp include damaged skirting boards and floorboards, crumbling or salt-stained plaster, and peeling paint or wallpaper. Rising damp often has the appearance of a tide mark running along the bottom of a wall.

Penetrating damp

Penetrating damp is caused by water seeping through the walls from outside and is caused by structural problems such as faulty guttering or roofing. It usually shows up as a concentrated damp patch on walls, ceilings or floors with a clear edge. This type of damp often gets worse when it rains.

Plumbing fault

A plumbing fault such as a leak in a water or waste pipe can cause damp. This would usually occur in a kitchen or bathroom. The damp area would be wet to touch and would remain consistently damp regardless of the weather outside.



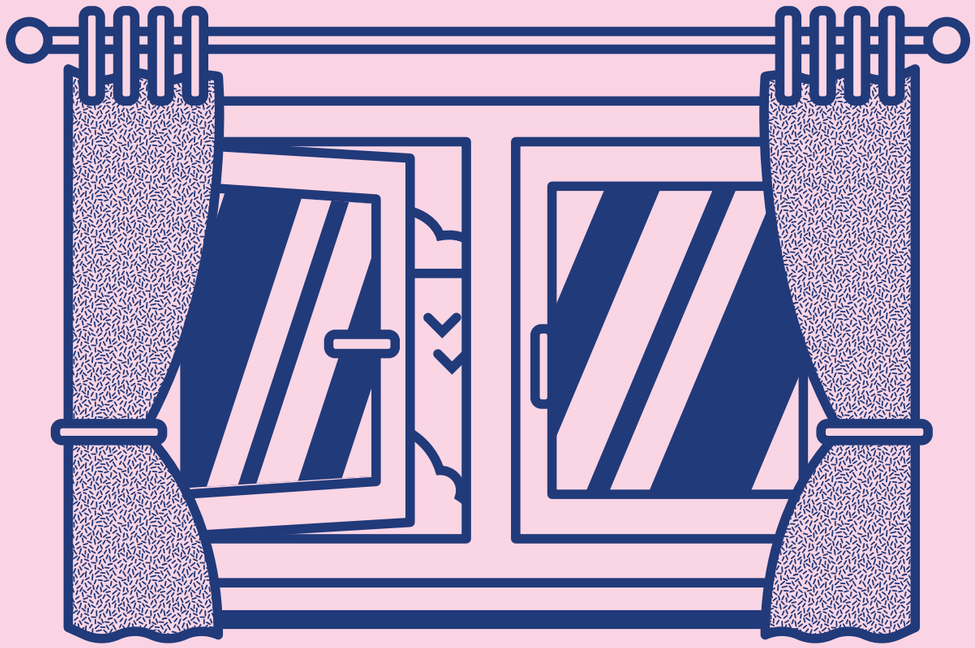
What is mould?

Excess condensation or structural damp issues can cause sitting water on surfaces like ceilings, walls and floors. This can lead to damage in your home, such as flaking paintwork, peeling wallpaper or black mould. Black mould can grow on any surface, but common places include windowsills, ceilings or walls. If you notice mould forming, it's important that it's treated straight away as it can spread quickly and be harmful to your health. Using a clean cloth and a white vinegar spray is an effective way to treat and remove small areas of mould. White vinegar can be used safely on most surfaces and will penetrate porous materials to kill the mould at the roots.

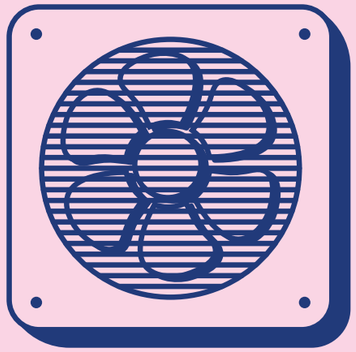
If mould returns after cleaning it away and following these tips, a structural issue may be the cause. Please contact us straight away so that we can arrange an inspection and take action to fix the problem.

Healthy Home Top Tips

The best way to prevent condensation is to reduce the amount of moisture produced in your home and keep it as warm and ventilated as possible. Here are some Healthy Home Top Tips to help you do this.

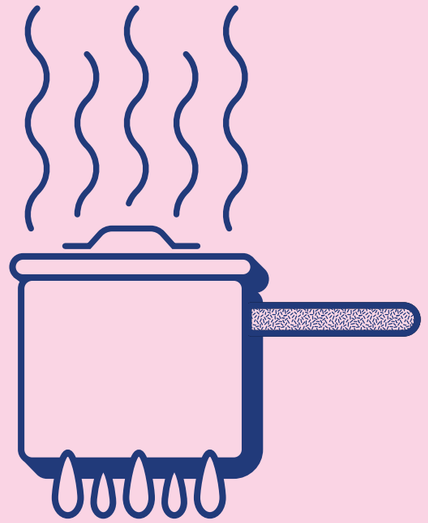


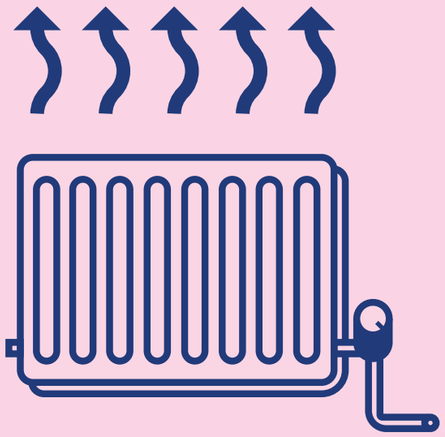
1. Opening windows when cooking, showering, bathing and drying clothes helps moist air escape.



2. Turning your extractor fan on when cooking, showering and bathing removes excess moisture from the air.

3. Putting lids on pans when cooking prevents excess moisture in the air (and helps save on your energy bill!)

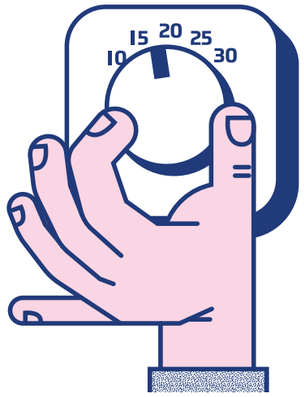




4. Keeping your home heated helps to prevent condensation from forming on surfaces. We understand that with the rise in energy prices, keeping your home heated may be more difficult. For help with your energy bills, head to page 15.

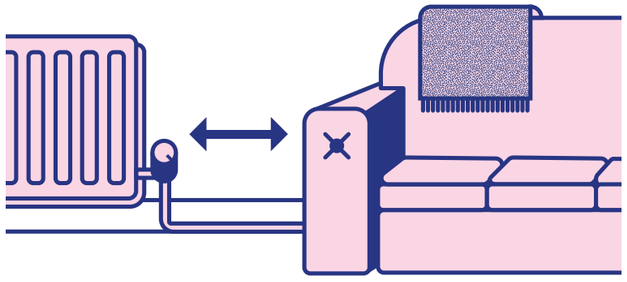
Healthy Home Top Tips

5. If you can, setting your thermostat to the lowest comfortable temperature (recommended between 18 – 21°C) will help to keep you and your home healthy while keeping your energy bills down. For help with your energy bills, head to page 15.

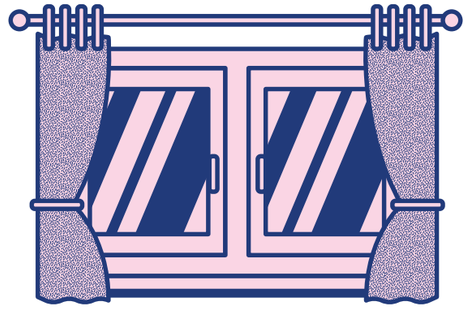


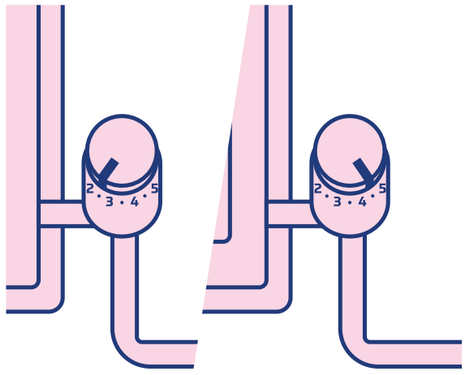
6. Drying clothes releases moisture, so if you have access to outside space, drying clothes outdoors helps to prevent excess moisture in your home. When using a drying rack indoors, opening a window slightly or turning on your extractor fan helps to remove excess moisture.

7. Moving sofas and other furniture away from radiators or heaters helps the heat to travel more effectively around the rooms in your home.



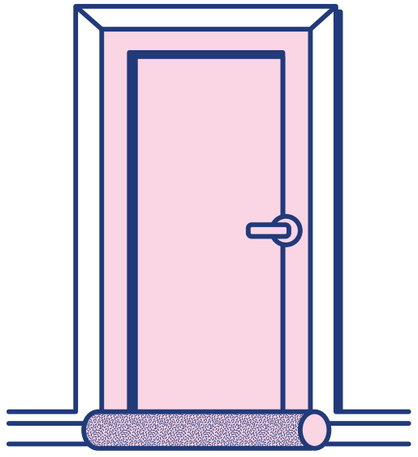
8. Curtains and rugs help to keep your home warm. Ideally, curtains should stop between the edge of the windowsill and above radiators. Opening them in the morning and closing them at dusk helps to let warmth in and keep the cold out.





9. Radiator valves allow you to control the temperature in each room. You can twist these to a higher setting in rooms you want to be warmer and lower in rooms you don't use as often, helping you to use your energy more efficiently and cost-effectively. Typical settings are 4-5 in living areas and 2-3 in bedrooms.

10. Closing internal doors and using draught excluders reduces the amount of heat moving into colder areas of your home. This helps keep the heat in the rooms you use most often, making them feel more comfortable.

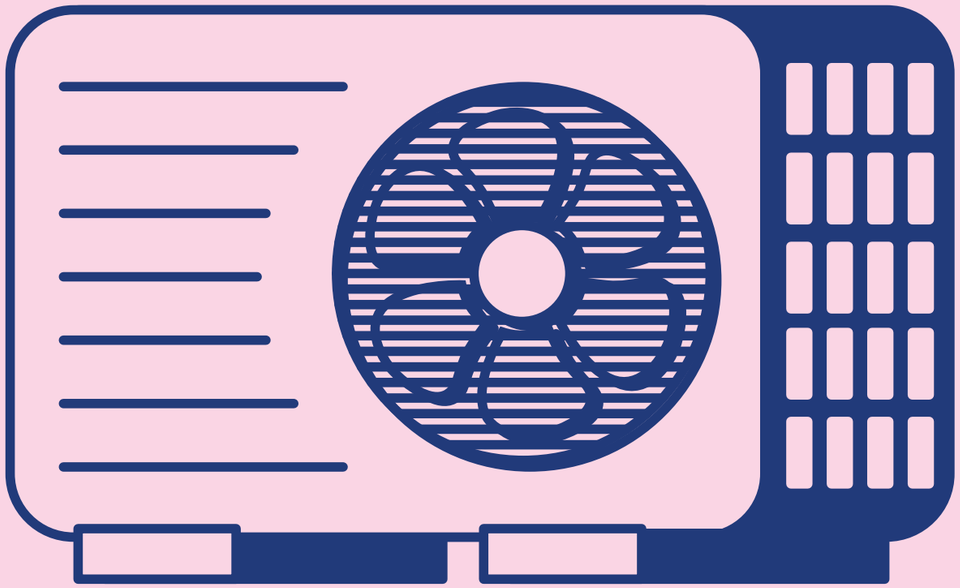


Homes with heat pumps or storage heaters

Heat pumps

If your home has a heat pump, it will usually be designed to only come on when your home gets cold. You can control how warm you'd like your home to be by using your thermostat. You don't need to worry about timing it to go off when you're out.

Contact us on 0117 942 4600 for advice on your controls.



Storage heaters

If your home has a storage heater, be familiar with your controls to stay warm and improve energy efficiency. 'Input' controls how much electricity is stored as heat. 'Output' controls how quickly that heat is released the following day. In colder weather, turning 'input' up will store more heat. If you're home and want more heat, you can set the 'output' higher. Turn 'output' lower while you're asleep or out of the home to keep energy bills down. Remember, you need to set the 'input' today for the heat you need tomorrow.

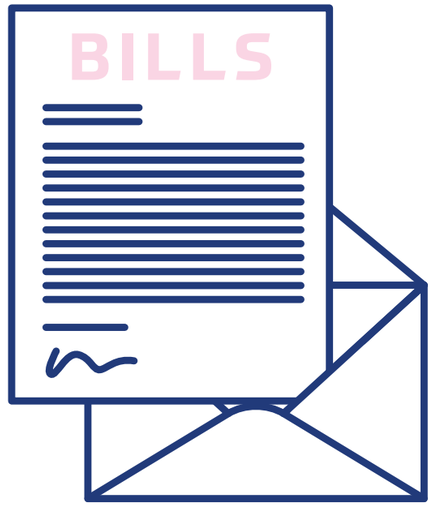
Contact us on 0117 942 4600 for advice on your controls.

Help with your energy bills

If you're struggling to pay your energy bills, speak to your energy provider to find out about any help they might be able to give.

For money advice and support, contact us on 0117 942 4600.

For more information and support to help with the cost of living, visit www.brighterplaces.co.uk.



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The energy saving advice in this handbook has been supplied by Energy Saving Trust.

For more Healthy Home Top Tips to reduce condensation visit www.brighterplaces.co.uk or call us on 0117 942 4600.

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