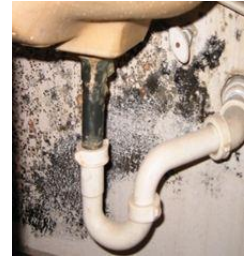


Mold



What are molds?

Molds are a type of fungus, with many different types, that are found in nature. However, molds can become a problem when they go where they are not wanted, like our home.

What makes molds grow in my home?

Molds can grow on almost any surface, such as wood, ceiling tiles, wallpaper, paint, carpet, sheet rock, and insulation. Mold grows best when there is a lot of moisture, or wetness, in their area. This can happen from a leaky roof, or high humidity.

Do molds affect my health?

Most molds do not harm healthy people. But people who have allergies or asthma may be more sensitive to molds. People with weakened immune systems or underlying lung disease, may be at increased risk for infections from molds. A small number of molds produce toxins called mycotoxins, which may cause negative health effects. If you or your family members have health problems that you suspect are caused by exposure to mold, you should consult with your physician.

Sensitive people may experience:

- skin rash
- running nose
- eye irritation
- cough
- nasal congestion
- worsening asthma or difficulty breathing

Mycotoxins may cause:

- fatigue
- nausea
- headaches
- irritation to the lungs and eyes

When is mold a problem?

You know you have mold when you smell the "musty" odor or see small black or white specks along your damp bathroom or basement walls. Some mold is hidden growing behind wall coverings or ceiling tiles. Even dry, dead mold can cause health problems, so always take precautions when you suspect mold. Mold is often found in areas where water has damaged building materials and furniture from flooding or plumbing leaks. Mold can also be found growing along walls where warm moist air condenses on cooler wall surfaces, such as inside cold exterior walls, behind dressers, headboards, and in closets where clothes or things are stored against walls. Mold often grows in rooms with both high water usage and humidity, such as kitchens, bathrooms, laundry rooms, and basements. If you notice mold or know of water damaged areas in your home, it's important to take steps to stop its growth.

Can I control mold growth in my home?

Yes, you can. Dry out the house and fix any moisture problems in your home:

- Stop water leaks, repair leaky roofs and plumbing. Keep water away from concrete slabs and basement walls.
- Open windows and doors to increase air flow in your home, especially along the inside of exterior walls. Use a fan if there are no windows available.
- Make sure that warm air flows into all areas of the home. Move large objects a few inches away from the inside of exterior walls to increase air circulation.
- Install and use exhaust fans in bathrooms, kitchens, and laundry rooms.
- Ventilate and insulate attic and crawl spaces. Use heavy plastic to cover earth floors in crawl spaces.
- Clean and dry water damaged carpets, clothing, bedding, and upholstered furniture within 24 to 48 hours, or consider removing and replacing damaged furnishings.
- Vacuum and clean your home regularly to remove mold spores.
- Check around your windows for signs of condensation and water droplets. Wipe them up right away so mold can't start to grow.

What can I use to clean up mold?

Clean up mold and take care of the problem by following the advice above to keep your home dry and keep mold out. Act fast! Mold damages your home as it grows. Clean it up as soon as possible.

Size the Moldy Area

Decide if you have a large or small area of mold. A small area is less than about ten square feet, or a patch three feet by three feet square. To clean a small area, follow the advice below. You may use a cotton face mask for protection.

If you have a lot of mold damage (more than ten square feet) consider hiring a cleaning professional. If the moldy area has been contaminated by sewage or is in hidden places, hire a professional. To find a professional, check under "Fire and Water Damage Restoration" in your Yellow Pages. If you decide to clean up on your own, follow the guidance below.

- **Use Protection:** Wear goggles, gloves, and breathing protection while working in the area. For large consolidated areas of mold growth, you should wear an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) approved particle mask.
- **Seal the Area:** Seal off area from the rest of your home. Cover heat registers or ventilation ducts/grills. Open a window before you start to clean up.
- **Remove Items:** Remove all your furnishings to a mold-free area. Clean the surrounding moldy area then follow cleaning directions below for the items you removed and the new space.
- **Bag Moldy Trash:** Bag all moldy materials and tie off the top of the bag. Bring them outdoors and place in your garbage container right away.
- **Scrub Surfaces**
 - First wash with a mild detergent solution, such as laundry detergent and warm water. Allow to dry.
 - (Optional step) Then wipe with a solution of 1/4 cup bleach to one gallon of water. Wait 20 minutes and repeat. Wait another 20 minutes.
 - Last apply a borate-based detergent solution and don't rinse. This will help prevent mold from growing again. A borate-based laundry or dish washer detergent has "borate" listed on the ingredients label.
- **Clean and Wash:** Give the entire area a good cleaning, vacuum floors, and wash any exposed bedding or clothing.
- **Monitor:** Check regularly to make sure mold has not returned to the clean-up area.

What cleans moldy furniture and other items?

- For wood, metal, plastic, glass, ceramics, and other objects that don't absorb water but are washable - wipe them with a solution of lukewarm water and laundry detergent.
- For clothes, bedding, and other materials that absorb water and are washable - wash them in the laundry.
- For beds, sofas, and other furniture that absorb water but are not washable - these items may need to be discarded. Or, try to save them by vacuuming well and allowing to air out. If there is no odor it may be okay. Mold can come back, so watch for any mold growth or mold related health problems. Discard the item if you suspect mold is growing inside or outside the item.

Should I paint over mold?

No. Don't paint or caulk over mold. The mold will grow under the paint and the paint will peel.

More Information

- Mold and Indoor Air Quality Information Line: 360-236-3090
- Mold, CDC (www.cdc.gov/mold)
- Mold, EPA (www.epa.gov/mold)

