U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development • Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control

HEALTHYHOMES
Healthy Families | Healthy Children

MOLD

"The key to mold control is moisture control."

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Did you know...?

- Stains or discoloration on your walls, ceiling, or furniture?
- A damp or musty smell?
- Water problems like a leaky roof or water in the basement?

Molds are alive. There are hundreds of thousands of different types of mold. They are living organisms that grow naturally, particularly in warm, damp, humid conditions where there is little air movement. Often called "mildew," we can only see or smell mold when there is a large quantity. Mold can grow almost anywhere: on walls, ceilings, carpets, or furniture. Humidity or wetness, caused by water leaks, spills from bathtubs or showers, or condensation, can cause mold to grow in your home.

Mold produces "spores," tiny particles that float through the air. These can sometimes cause health problems. Mold does not affect everyone, and different people are affected differently when mold is breathed or inhaled. People who are allergic to mold may get watery eyes, runny or stuffed noses, itching, headaches, and may have difficulty breathing. Mold can also trigger asthma attacks (see "Asthma" fact sheet). Some molds produce toxins (poisons) that may be hazardous if people are exposed to large amounts of these molds.

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You cannot eliminate all mold spores from a home, but you can take the following steps to prevent and get rid of mold.

1. Prevent: keep your house clean and dry.

- Fix water problems such as roof leaks, wet basements, and leaking pipes or faucets.
- Make sure your home is well ventilated and always use ventilation fans in bathrooms and kitchens.
- If possible, keep humidity in your house below 50% by using an air conditioner or dehumidifier.
- Avoid carpeting in kitchens, bathrooms, and basements. Dry floor mats as quickly as possible.

2. Identify: find mold that might be growing in your home.

- Search for areas that have a damp or moldy smell, especially in basements, kitchens, and bathrooms.
- Look for water stains fuzzy growth or discoloration on and around ceilings, walls, floors, window sills and pipes.
- Search behind and underneath materials such as carpeting, furniture, or stored items.
- Inspect kitchens, bathrooms, and basements for standing water, water stains, and patches of out-of-place color.

3. Respond: fix any water problems immediately and clean or remove wet materials, furnishings, or mold.

- Clean up spills or floods within one day.
- Dry all surfaces and fix the problem or leak to prevent further damage.
- Install a dehumidifier where there is high humidity.
- Replace water damaged components, such as drywall and insulation.
- Clean mold off non-porous surfaces with a weak solution of bleach and water (no more than 1 cup to 1 gallon water).
- Throw away moldy materials that cannot be cleaned, such as carpet, upholstered furniture, drywall, and floorboards.
- When cleaning mold, protect yourself by wearing long sleeves, pants, shoes, and rubber gloves, as well as goggles and a facemask.
- If you find a large area of mold (larger than the top of a twin-sized bed) or are allergic to mold, consider hiring a professional to clean it and fix the cause of the problem.

(For a list of mold-removal professionals, look under "Fire and Water Damage Restoration" in your telephone book.)

Moldy materials that cannot be cleaned should be thrown away.

For More Information...

Visit HUD's website at www.hud.gov/healthyhomes for more information about addressing health hazards in homes or to learn if HUD has a Healthy Homes program in your community. From this website, you can download a copy of "Help Yourself to A Healthy Home" for more practical steps you can take to make your home a healthy home.

Other Federal Resources

EPA: Indoor Air Quality – Mold. "Mold Resources"
www.epa.gov/mold

FEMA: Actions to Take Following a Flood
www.fema.gov/hazards/floods/

Other Resources

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology (AAAAI):
www.aaaai.org

American Industrial Hygiene Association
www.aiha.org/

California Department of Health, Mold
www.cal-iaq.org