

Frequently Asked Questions about Mold

Overview

Mold is a natural part of the outdoors. It is in outdoor air at some level during each season. For mold to grow inside, water, moisture, or humidity are present as well.

How do I know if I have a mold problem?

If you can see or smell mold in your home, you probably have a mold growth problem.

What causes mold?

Mold growth problems are **ALWAYS** caused by moisture or water present where there should not be. It will not help to only clean the mold if you have not solved the moisture/water problem first.

Where should I look for mold?

Look for mold in places where there may be water issues (under sinks, in laundry rooms, kitchens, bathrooms, where a roof has leaked, in the basement, etc.).

Should I test my home for mold?

No. It is **NOT** recommended that you test for mold for many reasons:

- Mold is present at some level in outdoor air throughout the year, so test results may be unreliable.
- It is very difficult, even for professionals, to get meaningful test results for mold.
- Mold testing is expensive.
- There are no regulatory levels or guidelines for comparing test results.

Will mold make me sick?

Mold can cause an allergic reaction in some people. If you are NOT allergic to mold, it is unlikely that you will have health effects from mold exposure. If you are allergic to mold, your reaction depends on how sensitive you are to mold. Symptoms of an allergic reaction are

- Itchy or watery eyes, runny nose
- Sinus drainage
- Respiratory discomfort
- Cough

I have found an area covered in mold, how do I clean it up?

If the material is **solid** (it **will not** absorb water) such as a concrete, tile or vinyl flooring, plastic patio furniture, plastic toys, tub surrounds, paneling, molding, etc., use a mild household detergent solution to wipe away the mold.

If the surface **will** absorb water, such as drywall, carpeting, furniture, bedding, clothing, stuffed animals, books, etc., remove, discard, and replace the items or surfaces the mold is growing on.

It is not necessary to use bleach on mold, unless you want to disinfect the surface. If you choose to use bleach to disinfect an area or to remove mold stains, follow these guidelines:

1. Clean the surface first and remove all debris.
2. Provide airflow with a fan, open window, or door.
3. Prepare the bleach solution according to the manufacturer's instructions. Keep the surface wet for 15 minutes before wiping it down.
4. Never mix bleach with ammonia or any other cleaners.
5. Rinse the area with clean water.

Resources:

CDC: [Guidelines for Cleaning Safely After a Disaster – Floodwater and mold](#)

CDC: [Homeowner's and Renter's Guide to Mold Cleanup After Disasters \(PDF\)](#)

EPA: [Flooded Homes – Mold and Moisture Basics \(Video\)](#)

EPA: [Flooded Homes – Protecting Your Health – Mold and Bacteria](#)

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): [About Mold and Moisture](#)