How can I control mold inside my home?

Although it is not possible to eliminate all mold or mold spores in your home, the best way to control mold is to control moisture. Mold growth can occur indoors when old spores land on wet surfaces, especially those that remain constantly wet or damp. Mold will not grow if moisture is not present.

- Repair any water leaks.
- Provide good air circulation.
- All forced air should have a good electrostatic filter on the return.
- Use bathroom, kitchen, and laundry room exhaust fans.
- Insulate and ventilate attic and crawl space areas.
- Clean, dry, or remove items that are damaged by water within 48 hours.

After addressing sources of water and/or humidity problems in your home, clean up can proceed. If the moldy area is larger than a 3 foot by 3 foot area you may wish to consider hiring a professional who has experience in cleaning up mold and who follows the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) mold remediation recommendations. Porous materials such as carpet, insulation and wall board with more than surface contamination will usually need to be replaced if they have more than a small area of mold.

Soap clean-up

- Wear rubber/vinyl gloves.
- Use a non-ammonia soap, detergent, or commercial cleaner in hot water.
- Scrub the entire area.
- Use a scrub brush or cleaning pad to clean uneven surfaces.
- Rinse with water; wet/dry vacuum may be used.

Disinfect surfaces

- Clean surfaces with ¼ cup of bleach diluted in 1 quart of water, (repeat).

Continued...

- Wash all clothing and any objects that can be laundered.
- Discard any objects that are moldy in a sealed plastic bag and remove to the outside.
- Objects such as wood, plastic, or glass can be washed with one cup bleach to one quart of water.
- Never mix anything with bleach except water.

Resources

Is Indoor Mold Contamination a Threat to Health?
Washington State Dept. of Health
www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/oehas/mold.html

Facts About Mold
NYC Dept. of Health–DOH
www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/doh/ei/eimold.html

Guidelines on Assessment and Remediation of Fungi in Indoor Environments
www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/doh/epi/moldrpt1.html

Mold

Mold in My Home: What Do I Do?
www.cal-iaq.org/mold9803.htm
www.health.state.nd.us/sdhp/flood/mold.htm.

Indoor Air Quality - Mold
Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/mold

Household Mold - How Do I Clean Up?
National Association of Homebuilders
www.moldtips.com

Special thanks to Kathy Agnes, RN, CIC, for writing the original manuscript. Reviewed by Lianne Delaney, RN, MPH, CIC

Copyright © 2005 by The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, 1275 K Street NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005-4006
www.apic.org
Mold in Your Home

What is mold?
Molds are organisms that are considered to be part of the fungus family. There are thousands of varieties. They can be found both indoors and outdoors. Some of the characteristics of molds include:
• Reproduce through spore production
• Produce enzymes
• Decompose leaves, wood, plants, and food
• Moisture is needed for growth, enzyme production and survival

What types of mold are harmful?
• Many types of molds are potentially harmful
• Most common types of mold
**Some molds can produce chemicals known as mycotoxins.**

Mycotoxins are known to be:
• toxic agents which cause illness in sensitive people
• common in occupations like farming

How can someone be exposed to mold?
Spores are released in the air when the molds are bothered in any way. Some molds can produce a chemical known as mycotoxin. People who are sensitive to mycotoxin can become ill. There are several methods of exposure:
• Breathing in the spores from the air
• Skin contact from handling an item that has mold growing on it
• Eating without properly washing your hands after handling moldy objects

Where can I find mold in my home?
Mold can be found in several areas in the home environment. It appears most often in moist areas as little black circles or thread-like white objects. It is usually accompanied with a musty-type odor. Some examples of places where mold can be found inside the home include:
• Basements, kitchens (bottom of fridge), bathrooms, washer/dryer area
• Carpets
• Walls (sheet rock)
• Ceilings
• Flooring
• Wood
• Books
• Clothing
• Food
Examples where mold can be found in the outside environment include:
• Leaves
• Wood
• Plants

Who is at risk of being exposed?
Everyone is exposed to mold. Healthy people are often unaffected. People diagnosed with allergies and asthma may be very sensitive to molds. Others at risk may include: infants and children, the elderly, immune-compromised (e.g. HIV, cancer, people on steroids), and pregnant women. Some symptoms may include:
• Eye irritation (tearing, burning, itching)
• Nose irritation, (sneezing, runny nose)
• Respiratory type symptoms (cough, sore throat)
• Upper or lower respiratory infections

How do I check for mold?
• Visual inspection
  1. Look for any water damage and mold growth.
  2. Check the vent filters for dampness.
  3. Check the ventilation system for cleanliness and dampness.
  4. Check ceiling tiles, wallboard, cardboard, paper for wetness or mildew.
• Air monitoring is usually not part of a routine assessment.
  1. Personnel conducting air sampling must be trained.
  2. Consult with a mycology laboratory for specific sampling.
  3. Some air samples can give you inaccurate results (false positive).

Should I have my home tested for mold by a professional?
Testing for mold should not be the first step; it can be expensive and unreliable.