



MOLD 101

What are molds?

Molds are tiny microscopic organisms that digest organic matter and reproduce by releasing spores. Molds are a type of fungi and there are over 100,000 species. In nature, mold helps decompose or break-down leaves, wood and other plant debris.

What makes molds grow in my home?

Mold enters your home as tiny spores. The spores need moisture to begin growing, digesting and destroying. Molds can grow on almost any surface, including; wood, ceiling tiles, wallpaper, paints, carpet, sheet rock, and insulation. The mold grows best when there is lots of moisture from a leaky roof, high humidity, or flood. There is no way to get rid of all molds and mold spores from your home. But you can control mold growth by keeping your home dry.

When is mold a problem?

Molds become a problem when they go where they are not wanted and digest materials such as our homes. 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 articles 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 is time to take action to control its growth.

Mold Remediation

ACT QUICKLY! Use a certified professional to remediate large mold problems.

Find the source of the water leak and address it as soon as possible. The mold will only continue if the source of the problem has not been fixed.

Mold Myths

Mold does not go away from bleach and scraping the surface.

Do not paint or caulk over the moldy surface.

Do not vacuum mold from carpet.

What are some of the common indoor molds?

- Cladosporium
- Penicillium
- Alternaria
- Aspergillus

Ten Things You Should Know About Mold

1. Potential health effects and symptoms associated with mold exposures include allergic reactions, asthma, and other respiratory complaints.
2. There is no practical way to eliminate all mold and mold spores in the indoor environment; the way to control indoor mold growth is to control moisture.
3. If mold is a problem in your home or school, you must clean up the mold and eliminate sources of moisture.
4. Fix the source of the water problem or leak to prevent mold growth.
5. Reduce indoor humidity (to 30-60%) to decrease mold growth by: venting bathrooms, dryers, and other moisture-generating sources to the outside; using air conditioners and de-humidifiers; increasing ventilation; and using exhaust fans whenever cooking, dishwashing, and cleaning.
6. Clean and dry any damp or wet building materials and furnishings within 24-48 hours to prevent mold growth.
7. Clean mold off hard surfaces with water and detergent, and dry completely. Absorbent materials such as ceiling tiles, that are moldy, may need to be replaced.
8. Prevent condensation: Reduce the potential for condensation on cold surfaces (i.e., windows, piping, exterior walls, roof, or floors) by adding insulation.
9. In areas where there is a perpetual moisture problem, do not install carpeting (i.e., by drinking fountains, by classroom sinks, or on concrete floors with leaks or frequent condensation).
10. Molds can be found almost anywhere; they can grow on virtually any substance, providing moisture is present. There are molds that can grow on wood, paper, carpet, and foods.

My landlord or builder will not take any responsibility for cleaning up the mold in my home.

Where can I go for help?

If you feel your property owner, landlord, or builder has not been responsive to concerns you've expressed regarding mold exposure, you can contact your local board of health or housing authority. Applicable codes, insurance, inspection, legal, and similar issues about mold generally fall under state and local (not federal) jurisdiction. You could also review your lease or building contract and contact local or state government authorities, your insurance company, or an attorney to learn more about local codes and regulations and your legal rights. CDC does not have enforcement power in such matters, nor can we provide you with advice. You can contact your county or state health department about mold issues in your area to learn about what mold assessment and remediation services they may offer. You can find information on your state's Indoor Air Quality program at http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/indoor_air.htm.