

# Mold

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## Mold in Your Home

### I. Health Effects

Some individuals may not be affected by mold exposures, while others may experience an allergic-type reaction, with one or more of the following symptoms: watery eyes, runny nose, sneezing, nasal congestion, coughing, difficulty breathing, headache, fatigue, sore throat and dizziness.

### II. Conditions for Mold Growth in the Home

In order for molds to survive and grow, two things are needed: nutrients and moisture. Nutrients can come from a variety of sources, including building materials, furniture, paper, dust and soil. Moisture can come from water leaks, flooding, high humidity and condensation. Molds grow best at 77-86° F in areas with poor air circulation, but have been known to grow in temperatures as low as 32°F and as high as 95°F. Molds can be white, green, brown, black or orange in color and have a musty odor. Usually if you see or smell mold in your home you can assume you have a problem. Common places for growth to occur include:

Air ducts	Air conditioners	Air Cleaning Filters	Humidifiers	Carpet
Furniture	Carpet pads	Bathrooms	Kitchens	Laundry Rooms
Basements	Crawl Spaces	Insulation	Gas Heaters	Gas Stoves
Closets	Dirt Floors	Refrigeration Drip Pans	Paper	Wood

Drywall

### III. Removing Mold Growth in the Home

The quicker molds are removed, the better. Painting over it or covering it will not solve the problem. First, fix the leaks that are providing moisture, otherwise the mold will continue to grow after you clean it up. Next, dry out the area using fans or dryers (this could take several days). If the affected area is large, it should be sealed off from the rest of the house. This prevents the mold spores from blowing into other areas of the house.

The next step is to physically remove the mold by scraping or scrubbing the mold. Then disinfect the area in order to help prevent future mold growth. Diluted household bleach, alcohols, quaternary ammonia compounds or hydrogen peroxide can be used to disinfect. Allow a 15-minute contact time between the mold and the disinfectant. Household bleach is inexpensive and the most readily available disinfectant. Use a dilution of a half-cup of bleach to one gallon of water. Never mix cleaning products or disinfectants, especially ones that contain bleach and ammonia, because dangerous gases can form. Mattresses, wicker furniture, baskets, carpets, drapes, toys, upholstered furniture, insulation and carpet pads should be discarded if they have mold growing on them. Some items may be professionally restored, but generally it is recommended that items be discarded if they are wet and cannot be cleaned and dried out, especially if they were damaged by sewage or flood waters. Items exposed to only airborne mold spores can be cleaned.

#### **IV. Preventing and Controlling Mold Growth in the Home**

Although it is impossible to get rid of all mold, it is possible to prevent and control mold growth. Suggestions to prevent mold from growing in your home include:

- Ventilate rooms where moisture is likely to collect (bathroom, kitchen, laundry room, crawlspace and basement) by opening windows or using fans.
- Structural wood floors should be totally sealed, have a sealed plastic barrier over the top of the soil in the crawlspace, and have ventilation between the plastic and under floor.
- Air out your home regularly with fresh air
- Properly clean and maintain your home
- Fix leaks in the roof or siding of your home, and fix an area in the foundation where water seeps in
- Install gutters on your house, downspouts should end 5 feet away from the side of the home
- Slope the ground away from your house
- Fix leaks in pipes and around bathtubs and sinks
- Vent the clothes dryer outside
- Turn off humidifiers if you notice condensation on windows or other surfaces; drain water reservoirs from stand-alone humidifiers. Since humidifiers are problematic for mold, try not to use them.
- Open doors between rooms to increase circulation
- Ensure carpet on concrete floors does not absorb water
- Inspect and clean furnaces and air conditioning regularly

**For more information, contact:**



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