Cleaning Mold in Your Home

- Clean the area using a general-purpose detergent in hot water. Follow the instruction label.
- Use a stiff brush or cleaning pad on uneven surfaces or difficult to clean areas.
- Rinse the area with clean water.
- Allow the area to dry completely before repainting or repairing.
- Absorbent materials, such as ceiling tiles, drywall and sheetrock, carpet, and upholstered furniture may need to be thrown out if they become moldy.
- Mold may hide behind walls, above ceilings, or in other inaccessible areas. Clean up may require their removal to find the mold. Professional services may be required to identify hidden moisture and mold growth.

What precautions should I take while cleaning up mold?

There are several ways you can protect yourself while cleaning up the mold.

- Shut off forced hot air heating systems, air conditioning, and fans to prevent mold spores from being spread around the home.
- Wear rubber gloves.
- For larger areas or if you are sensitive to mold you should wear an N-95 type respirator, available from most home supply stores.

Anyone with a chronic respiratory illness, such as asthma or emphysema, or anyone with a weak immune system should not clean up mold.

Toxic Mold

There are some molds, such as *Stachybotrys* and *Aspergillus*, which under certain conditions can produce toxins called mycotoxins. Although the health effects to mold exposure are normally allergic symptoms, exposure to mycotoxins can cause more serious illness. **Since all molds can cause health symptoms, all molds should be handled with caution during removal.**

Additional Online Resources

Rhode Island Department of Health
www.health.ri.gov/environment/risk/mold.php

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
www.cdc.gov/mold/

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Mold Information
www.epa.gov/mold/index.html
Indoor Air Quality Information
www.epa.gov/iaq/index.html

American Lung Association
www.lungusa.org

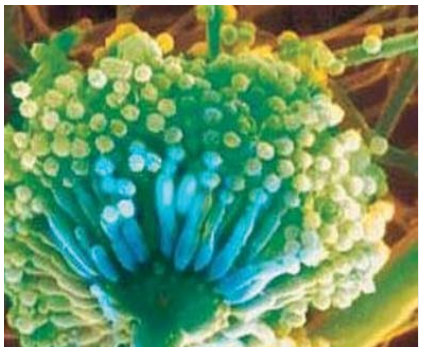
For more information on mold call the HEALTH Information Line
1.800.942.7434

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Healthy Homes and Environment Team

SOME FACTS ABOUT

Mold



What is Mold?

Molds are living organisms that help to break down dead organic materials. It is found everywhere: indoors, on many surfaces, and outdoors, on plants, leaves and in the soil. Mold spores travel through air. Once mold lands on a surface, it can grow as long as there is the right mix of moisture and food. Mold growth can look like spots, in many different colors, and can smell musty.

What does mold need to grow?

- a food source such as leaves, paper, wood or other organic material
- a source of moisture
- a suitable environment

Many surfaces in your home can provide nutrients to help mold grow, including wall coverings, floors, carpets, clothing, and furniture.

Reducing moisture is key to controlling mold. Mold will not grow without it.

Mold is an indicator that there is excess moisture in your home. What causes excess moisture?

- flooding
- damp basement or crawl space
- leaky roof
- leaky plumbing
- humidifiers
- clothes dryer vented indoors

How do I control mold in my home?

- Keep the humidity level between 40% and 60%. Dehumidifiers may be needed in areas, such as the basement.
- Fix leaks in the roof, walls, windows, or pipes.
- Ventilate bathrooms, kitchens, and laundry areas.
- Vent clothes dryer to the outside.
- Use mold-resistant paint.
- Dry areas that are wet or have been flooded within 24 to 48 hours. Throw out anything that cannot be completely dried.

What are the common health effects from exposure to mold?

You are exposed to some mold every day, usually by touching, eating, or breathing it. Exposure to mold and mold spores can trigger allergic reactions such as watery eyes, runny nose, sneezing, itching, coughing, wheezing, headache, and fatigue. Mold affects everyone differently. Some are more sensitive to molds than others, such as:

- infants and children
- the elderly
- people with weak immune systems such as those with HIV infection, cancer, or who are in chemotherapy
- people with chronic respiratory illnesses or respiratory conditions such as allergies and asthma

Anyone with a chronic respiratory illness or a weak immune system should not clean up mold.

Should I be concerned about mold in my home?

Indoor air quality is also negatively affected by mold. It can increase asthma events and chronic exposure to mold can increase a person's sensitivity resulting in more severe allergic reactions.

Should I test my home for mold?

If you can see or smell mold, it is present and must be cleaned up. You also need to fix the problem causing the mold to prevent it from growing again. There are no standards for mold tests, and some level of mold is always present, therefore it is not recommended that testing be done.

My basement has flooded. What should I do?

Immediately correct the cause of the flooding and dry the area thoroughly within 24 to 48 hours. If carpets, clothing, paper, and other absorbent materials cannot be completely dried, it is best to throw them out. For insurance purposes, you should take photographs of all the damaged property. Other non-absorbent items should be cleaned and dried.

If the flooding was caused by sewage or other contaminated water, you should call in a professional who has experience in it. Ask your homeowner insurance company for a recommendation.

Mold Cleaning Guidelines

It is important to make sure that the source of moisture is eliminated before the mold is cleaned up. If this is not done, the mold will grow again. If the area of mold growth is larger than 10 ft^2 (3 ft x 3 ft), it is recommended that a contractor with experience in mold remediation does the clean up. If the area is less than 10 ft^2 , in most cases, you can do the job yourself.

For more information on mold call the HEALTH Information Line 1.800.942.7434