

EPA - Mold Basics

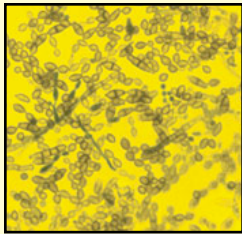
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

"A Brief Guide To Mold, Moisture and Your Home"



These are highlights from the E.P.A.'s website @ www.epa.gov/mold

Mold Spores Magnified



The key to mold control is moisture control.

- If mold is a problem in your home, you should clean up the mold promptly and fix the water problem.
- It is important to dry water-damaged areas and items within 24-48 hours to prevent mold growth.
- Mold damage covering more than 2 sq. feet requires a trained mold remediation professional for proper and safe clean-up.

Please note: Dead mold may still cause allergic reactions in some people, so it is not enough to simply kill the mold, it must also be removed.

Why is mold growing in my home?

- Molds are part of the natural environment.
- Molds reproduce by means of tiny spores; the spores are invisible to the naked eye and float through outdoor and indoor air.
- Mold may begin growing indoors when mold spores land on surfaces that are wet.
- There are many types of mold, and none of them will grow without water or moisture.

Can Mold Cause Health Problems?

- Molds are usually not a problem indoors, unless mold spores land on a wet or damp spot and begin growing.
- Molds have the potential to cause health problems. Molds produce allergens (substances that can cause allergic reactions), irritants, and in some cases, potentially toxic substances (mycotoxins).
- Inhaling or touching mold or mold spores may cause allergic reactions in sensitive individuals. Allergic responses include: hay fever-type symptoms, such as sneezing, runny nose, red eyes, and skin rash (dermatitis).
- Allergic reactions to mold are common. They can be immediate or delayed.
- Molds can also cause asthma attacks in people with asthma who are allergic to mold.
- In addition, mold exposure can irritate the eyes, skin, nose, throat, and lungs of both mold-allergic and non-allergic people. Symptoms other than the allergic and irritant types are not commonly reported as a result of inhaling mold.

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Hidden Mold Growing On The Back Of Wallpaper



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Suspicion of Hidden Mold

- You may suspect hidden mold if a building smells moldy, but you cannot see the source, or if you know there has been water damage and residents are reporting health problems.
- Mold may be hidden in places such as the back side of dry wall, wallpaper, or paneling, the top side of ceiling tiles, the underside of carpets and pads, etc.
- Other possible locations of hidden mold include areas inside walls around pipes (with leaking or condensing pipes), the surface of walls behind furniture (where condensation forms), inside ductwork, and in roof materials above ceiling tiles (due to roof leaks or insufficient insulation).

Investigating Hidden Mold Problems

- Investigating hidden mold problems may be difficult and will require caution when the investigation involves disturbing potential sites of mold growth.
- For example, removal of wallpaper can lead to a massive release of spores if there is mold growing on the underside of the paper.

"If you believe that you may have a hidden mold problem, consider hiring an experienced professional."

Cleanup and Biocides

- Biocides are substances that can destroy living organisms.
- The use of a chemical or biocide that kills organisms such as mold (chlorine bleach, for example) **is not recommended** as a routine practice during mold cleanup.
- There may be instances, however, when professional judgment may indicate its use (for example, when immune-compromised individuals are present).
- In most cases, it is not possible or desirable to sterilize an area; a background level of mold spores will remain - these spores will not grow if the moisture problem has been resolved.
- If you choose to use disinfectants or biocides, always ventilate the area and exhaust the air to the outdoors. Never mix chlorine bleach solution with other cleaning solutions or detergents that contain ammonia because toxic fumes could be produced.
- Please note: Dead mold may still cause allergic reactions in some people, so it is not enough to simply kill the mold, it must also be removed.