



# INDOOR AIR QUALITY & MOLD

## What is Mold?

Molds are simple organisms found virtually everywhere. In reality, mold only needs a food source and proper moisture to grow. Mold feeds on organic material (paper, wood, bread, lint, or dust).

Mold and exposure to mold spores may aggravate existing respiratory conditions such as asthma or allergies. Also, an individual may be particularly sensitive to certain types of mold and have an allergic reaction when exposed. However, each person's sensitivity is not going to be the same. There is no level of exposure to mold at which one is considered "safe".

## What Can I Do?

Because mold spores float freely through the air, almost any building can have mold growing in various degrees. Once there is sufficient moisture around organic material, mold will grow. If you have had any recent roof or plumbing leaks, flooding in the basement, or sewer back-up, you should look for mold. Some common places to find mold are:

- water-soaked wood
- wall paneling
- unpainted plaster board surfaces
- ceiling tiles
- cardboard
- stacks of newspaper



If these areas have been wet for a long time, usually longer than one week, you should look for mold. After the area has dried, mold will no longer grow, but the dry dusty remainder of the mold can get pulled into your furnace and blown all through the house. Appropriate cleanup is a must!

If you find mold in your home, it should be cleaned up immediately. Do not delay by trying to have the mold sampled or tested. Any visible mold in a home should be remediated.

## How to Clean up:

- Identify and repair all roof and plumbing leaks.
- All moldy surfaces should be cleaned with a household bleach and water. Mix 1 ½ cups of bleach per gallon of water. Make sure to ventilate the area, and use gloves and a face mask to protect yourself. Apply the mixture and let it sit for 15 minutes before wiping clean with water.
- If the area cannot be cleaned, like ceiling tiles, they must be replaced.
- If building materials are water damaged, get professional help to replace them.
- Throw away any wet newspaper or cardboard. Don't try to dry it out and save it.
- It may be necessary to do more cleanup in the home, especially if carpet and crawl spaces are involved.

Learn more in [Mold: A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture and Your Home](#) from the US EPA.



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