



Mold

What is Mold

Mold is a form of fungus. There are many different types, and they can grow indoors and outdoors. Indoor mold growth is most likely to occur during fall and winter when there is less ventilation from open windows and doors. Molds produce spores, which spread by floating in the air. Spores are present in all indoor environments. There is no way to prevent them and they thrive in environments that are moist and warm.

Molds have many colors and textures. They can be white, black, yellow, blue, or green, and often look like a stain or dirty area. They can also have a fuzzy or rough appearance, depending on the type of mold and where it grows.



Mold in a Home or Business

Mold spores are everywhere but are not visible to the naked eye. Spores enter buildings via open windows, doorways, and ventilation systems, or by attaching to objects, people, clothing, shoes, and pets. Mold will thrive if spores land somewhere with ideal growing conditions (Moisture and a supply of nutrients). If the environment is unsuitable for spores, they do not usually develop or cause a problem.

Mold often appears in specific areas, including where leaks and/or flooding have occurred, on windows where condensation builds up, and in places where air does not circulate (Inside a closet or in a damp basement). Mold grows well on many items found inside houses and buildings, including:

- Cardboard and paper
- Ceiling tiles
- Insulation materials
- Building materials
- Wood products
- Upholstery and other fabric

Mold growth is usually visible and often produces a musty odor. It may damage household items, and it can have a negative impact on health.

Mold and Health

As mold grows, it can produce allergens and irritants. Some of these can be toxic, especially to people with a sensitivity to them. In addition, dampness encourages materials such as paper products to break down. This increases the amount of particles, or dust, in the air. These particles can irritate the lungs, nose, and throat, especially in those with a breathing problem, asthma, or chronic lung condition.

A person with a sensitivity or allergy to any mold-related particles may experience a reaction when around mold. Mold allergies can produce symptoms similar to seasonal allergies. These include:

- Blocked or runny nose
- Itchy throat
- Watery eyes
- Itchy nose
- Sneezing

People with a mold allergy as well as asthma have a higher chance of an asthma attack when there is mold in the environment. Studies suggest that people have experienced additional symptoms after spending time in an environment where mold is present. These symptoms include:

- Skin and eye irritation
- Fever
- Insomnia
- Wheezing
- Fatigue
- Headache



Several factors affect the likelihood of someone having health problems due to mold. These include the person's immune system, their respiratory health, and how much mold is present in the environment.

Protect Against and Prevent Mold

Controlling moisture is the key to preventing mold growth. It is also important to keep the home or business clean and well ventilated. Causes of excess humidity in the home include:

- Use of water for washing and cooking
- Weather, such as rainy or humid days
- Water leaks
- A building with tightly sealed windows/doors

The Environmental Protection Agency advises people to aim for an indoor humidity level below 60%. You can reduce excess moisture and the risk of mold growth by:

- Acting quickly if a leak or spill occurs
- Using a dehumidifier to reduce indoor moisture
- Leaving windows open when possible
- Using exhaust fans to remove moisture when cooking
- Ensuring that all fabrics are thoroughly dry before storing
- Opening, emptying, and airing out rarely used drawers and closets from time to time
- Regularly cleaning so that mold cannot build up on surfaces, dust, or other matter
- Using mold-killing products when cleaning the bathroom and basement
- Avoid laying carpets in bathrooms and basements
- Maintaining building exteriors, including gutters and drains, to reduce the risk of leaks and excess water buildup

It is not always possible to prevent mold from growing, but regular cleaning and maintenance can reduce the risk of mold problems getting worse.

Remove Mold

Many items are available to help with or prevent a mold problem. These include dehumidifiers, which can reduce moisture levels in areas such as a basement, as well as humidity gauges and appropriate cleaning products. Always use personal protective equipment, such as gloves, a mask, and eye protection, when cleaning with commercial products.

Call in a professional to tackle large areas of mold specifically those covering an area of 10 feet by 10 feet or larger. They can help determine the cause of the problem, clean up existing mold, and recommend solutions prevent the problem from reappearing or getting worse.

To clean or remove mold:

- Wipe hard surfaces with a suitable commercial product or soap and water.
- Always dry surfaces after use or cleaning to prevent mold from reappearing.
- Ask your local hardware store about antifungal paints and other products that can help prevent mold from redeveloping once an area is cleaned.

Those with concerns about mold in the home, workplace, or other settings should speak with their landlord, homeowner or ask their healthcare provider or the City of Racine Public Health Department for advice. Visit www.epa.gov/mold for more information and tips on mold.