

Combat MOLD in Your Home

Mold can make your family sick. It can trigger asthma attacks, allergic reactions and affect the upper respiratory system. If you have a mold problem ACT QUICKLY! Prevent damage to your home and furnishings, save money, and avoid potential health problems by controlling moisture and eliminating mold growth.

Moisture Control is the key to Mold Control. Molds thrive where moisture is present. Mold can be found in damp basements, closets, bathrooms, houseplants, refrigerators, air conditioning systems, foam pillows, dryer vents and furniture. If there is mold in your home you must clean up the mold and fix the moisture problem as soon as possible.

- Act quickly to dry all wet materials
- Remove and dispose of all absorbent or porous materials such as ceiling tiles, carpet, or bedding. Cover in plastic when removing.
- Scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water and dry completely.
- Lower indoor humidity to 30 – 50 % with increased ventilation or a dehumidifier.

Disinfect any surfaces that came in contact with sewage with a bleach solution.

The use of a biocide (like chlorine bleach) is no longer recommended as routine in all mold clean-up. If you use bleach, as in the case of sewage contamination, always ventilate the area. Use ½ cup bleach per gallon water. Never mix chlorine bleach with other cleaning solutions! It can create poisonous gas. Allow bleach to dry on the surface.

Should I test for mold? Mold testing is expensive. EPA recommends: **Investigate – don't test.** The most practical and reliable tools to detect mold are your eyes and nose. If you see something that looks like mold, or detect an earthy, musty smell, assume you have mold. Search behind and underneath carpet and pad, wall-paper, vinyl flooring, closets, sink cabinets, furniture against a wall and stored items. **If you see or smell mold, you don't need to test; clean it up instead.**

Who should do the cleanup?

If the moldy area is less than 10 square feet (about 3 ft. X 3 ft) you can usually handle the job yourself, unless you have health concerns such as asthma. For larger areas with lots of water damage or mold, consider a professional contractor experienced in mold cleanup.

Take precautions to limit your exposure to mold during clean up.

- **Avoid breathing mold spores.** Wear a N-95 respirator, or high efficiency dust filter.
- **Do not touch mold with bare hands.** Wear rubber gloves when cleaning.
- **Wear goggles** to protect your eyes from mold spores.

Wear outer clothing to remove before leaving the work area, and wash or discard.

For a free copy of “A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture and Your Home” EPA Pub #402-K-02-003 contact Rebecca Blocker, Housing & Environmental Design Specialist, University of Missouri Extension. 756-4539. It is also available online at www.iaqinfo@aol.com.