Mold and Mildew

Mold is a common problem for homeowners in Missouri. It not only damages our homes and furnishings, but it also can cause serious health problems. Mold can cause infections, allergies, asthma and other breathing problems.

Mold likes pockets of stale air and humidity. Mold spores grow when the relative humidity is 50% or above and the temperature is 70 degrees or higher.

Places that mold can grow are beneath wallpaper, a leaking pipe inside a wall, above the ceiling, in ducts and closets, in bathrooms, kitchens and basements.

If there is mold in your home, you must clean up the mold and fix the moisture problem as soon as possible. This is one problem that really will continue to "grow" if you don’t take quick action.

First, check how much mold you have. If it’s larger than 10 square feet, you should have a professional remove the mold. (10 square feet is an area 3 feet by 3 feet; about the area that a person would cover if he or she stretched out his/her arms.) If it’s a smaller area than that, you can clean it, but take these extra steps to limit your exposure to mold during cleanup:

1. **Avoid breathing mold spores**  
   use N-95 respirator or high efficiency dust filter.

2. **Do not touch mold with bare hands**  
   wear rubber gloves.

3. **Wear goggles**  
   protect your eyes from mold spores.

4. **Wear outer clothing**  
   remove before leaving the work area.
To clean up mold:

- Remove and dispose of any moldy, absorbent materials such as ceiling tiles, carpet, or bedding. Cover in plastic when removing so you don’t spread the mold spores.

- Use detergent and water and a stiff, hard-bristle brush to scrub mold off hard surfaces. Use bleach as a last resort only. If the detergent does not work, use ½ cup bleach per 1 gallon of water.

- Dry completely.

- Replace the damaged wall, floor, carpet or ceiling.

- Lower humidity levels with increased ventilation or a dehumidifier.

### Chlorine Bleach – Handle with Caution

1. **Never mix chlorine bleach with other cleaning solutions.**

2. **Always ventilate the area when using chlorine bleach.**

For many years chlorine bleach was used to clean up mold. Because bleach is also a hazardous product, the use of a biocide (like chlorine bleach) is no longer recommended as routine in all mold clean-up. It should still be used to disinfect surfaces that came in contact with sewage.

To disinfect with bleach, as in the case of sewage contamination, use ½ cup bleach per gallon water. Allow bleach to dry on the surface. (EPA, 2006)