

Protect Yourself from Mold

After floods, excess moisture and standing water contribute to the growth of mold in homes and outbuildings. When returning home after a flood, mold may be present and could cause a health risk for your family.

People at Greatest Risk

Those at greatest risk from mold include people with:

- allergies, asthma, or other breathing conditions
- weak immune systems (such as people with HIV, chemotherapy patients)
- pregnant women
- young children
- elderly

Possible Health Effects

Most people will not have any health effects. People who are sensitive to mold may experience:

- stuffy nose, irritated eyes, wheezing, or skin irritation
- increased asthma symptoms or difficulty breathing
- mold infections in the lungs

If you or family members experience health problems after exposure to mold, contact your doctor or other health care provider.

Recognizing Mold

Sight

- Mold can appear as discolouration on walls or ceilings.
- Mold often appears as fuzzy black or green surface growth, but there are hundreds of species and many other colours.
- Mold will grow on almost any organic material, including wood, paper and fabric. It only takes 48 hours for mold to appear in damp materials.

Smell

- Mold can be detected by a bad smell. The odour is often musty, earthy or foul.

Cleaning Up Mold

Controlling moisture in your home is the most critical factor for preventing mold growth, so act quickly to dry out the building and remove damp materials that would support mold growth.

- Only clean mold yourself if the mold patch is less than 30 square feet (2.8 square meters). If the mold patch is larger, or if your heating, ventilation and air conditioning system is involved, hire a professional.
- People who are at greatest risk from mold should leave affected buildings until cleanup is complete.

- Wear a disposable respirator, disposable gloves and safety glasses. An N95 mask is considered a disposable respirator and is available at hardware stores. It should fit tightly to your face, and cover your nose and mouth. **Surgical or dust masks do not provide enough protection.**
- Mist the moldy surface lightly with rubbing alcohol before cleaning, to prevent mold from getting into the air during cleaning.
- Remove all porous items that have been wet for more than 48 hours and cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried. Wherever possible, porous materials such as drywall, wallpaper, insulation, ceiling tiles, fabric or carpet should be thrown out and replaced.
- Remove soaked drywall and other wall material, such as insulation, up to a 50 centimetres (20 inches) above the high water line. Leave walls open until the wood and building materials are completely dry, which can take up to several weeks. Superficial cleaning of wall materials such as drywall may be safe if you had a very brief flood in your basement and it was only a few inches deep.
- Non-porous materials such as metal, glass, hard plastic and semi-porous materials, such as wood and concrete, can be cleaned and reused if they are structurally sound. To remove mold from hard surfaces, use laundry or dish detergent and water. Use a stiff brush on rough-surface materials such as concrete.
- Throw away severely affected items and repair or replace damaged structures.
- Cleaned areas should be dry and free of any visible contamination when the work is complete.
- Wash all clothing thoroughly with hot water and detergent and dry it quickly. This includes clothes worn when cleaning a mold-contaminated area.
- If it's dry enough, temporarily store items outside of the home until insurance claims can be filed.

Clean-Up Precautions

- **Avoid using chlorine bleach to clean large patches of mold.** If you use bleach to spot-clean small patches, use it with caution. Wear rubber gloves and eye protection to avoid chemical burns.
- **Don't mix bleach with other chemical cleaners or disinfectants because it may cause toxic fumes.**
- If using other chemical disinfectants such as TSP, follow the instructions on the package.
- Vacuuming may increase the spread of mold and spores by making them go into the air. Central vacuums that exhaust to the outside, or those equipped with high-efficiency particulate air filters (HEPA) will minimize this exposure.
- No special restrictions apply to throwing out moldy materials, although they should be sealed in plastic bags if possible.

For more information:

- [Fighting Mold - The Homeowners' Guide](#). Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)

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