

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 be 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
- people with weak immune systems (ex. from HIV or chemotherapy treatments)
- pregnant women
- young children
- the elderly

Possible health affects

Most people's health will not be affected but people who are sensitive to mold may experience:

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

If you or a family member experiences 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 on damp materials.

Smell

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

Cleaning up mold

Controlling moisture is the best way to prevent mold growth, so act quickly to dry out your home and other buildings, 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 it is larger or if your heating, ventilation or air conditioning system is affected, hire a professional.

People 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 can't 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 20 inches (50 centimetres) above the high water line. Leave walls open until the wood and other building materials are completely dry. This 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 these 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 it 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.** This can cause toxic fumes.
- If using chemical disinfectants such as TSP, follow the instructions on the package.
- Vacuuming may increase the spread of mold spores into the air. Central vacuums with outside exhaust, or those equipped with high-efficiency particulate air filters (HEPA) will minimize the spread of mold spores.
- There are no special restrictions when throwing out moldy materials but if possible, seal them in plastic bags before putting in the garbage.