

Household Mold

Why does mold grow in my house?

Molds need three things to grow: wet surfaces, a nutrition source such as wood, wallboard, insulation, ceiling tiles, carpet or fabric and the appropriate temperature for the spore's growth.

Where to look for signs of mold?

- The kitchen and bathroom: look for loose and warped tiles or linoleum, discoloured walls especially around and under sinks, tubs, and toilets.
- Look at the walls inside cabinets; under throw rugs, behind and under refrigerators.
- Windows in all rooms and doors to the outside: look for chipping of paint or plaster or discoloration of walls or rotting wood frames.
- Check for condensation in window frames.
- Look at ceilings or wall areas that contain piping/plumbing fixtures.

To control mold growth in the home:

- Keep humidity levels as low as possible, ideally no higher than 50%.
- Promptly fix leaky roofs, windows, and pipes.
- Ventilate shower, laundry, and cooking areas.
- Thoroughly and quickly clean up and dry out any area that has been flooded or had a leak (ideally within 24 to 48 hours).
- Ensure that sliding doors seal.
- Look for broken, damaged or disconnected rain gutters.
- Check to see if water runs away from the foundation of the home and crawlspace.

Cleaning up Mold

Cleaning up mold will dramatically increase the amount of mold and mold spores in the air. Use disposable rubber gloves, goggles, and a respirator, available at your local hardware store, that will filter particles (n-95 or TC-21C cartridge types) during cleaning. Also be sure the area is well ventilated, open windows and doors and use fans to create a path of fresh air into the cleanup area that exists through the nearest opening to the outdoors, NOT through the rest of your house.



Follow these steps to clean up mold:

- Identify and correct the moisture problem.
- Remove, bag, and discard non-essential porous material that has been heavily contaminated (i.e., ceiling tiles, leather, cloth, sheetrock, plaster, panelling, wood products, paper, carpet, padding, etc.). When removing drywall or sheet rock, cut at least 12 inches beyond the area of visible mold. Hard material, such as glass, plastic, or metal can be kept after cleaning and disinfection.
- Use a non-ammonia soap or detergent in hot water by scrubbing the affected area. Use a stiff brush or cleaning pad on block walls or uneven surfaces.
- Thoroughly rinse the area with hot water and scrub the affected area. Use a stiff brush or cleaning pad on block walls or uneven surfaces.
- Disinfect the area with a dilute solution of 10 percent household bleach (do not mix with ammonia or other chemicals). Do not use straight bleach – it will not be more effective. Avoid letting any of the liquid runoff remain standing for too long.
- Completely dry the area for two or three days. Raising the temperature and using dehumidifiers or fans will help.
- Vacuum your home thoroughly, preferably with a HEPA or filtered vacuum.



**Denver Public Health
& Environment**

Denver Department of Public Health & Environment, Public Health Investigations, has developed this fact sheet to help people better understand the issues associated with indoor mold growth and the options available to resolve mold problems.

Key components to keeping mold out of your home are moisture control and increased ventilation in areas that are damp or wet.

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What can I do about mold in my rented home or apartment?

- If you see or smell mold in your rented home/apartment, it should be cleaned up and the moisture problem should be fixed. Inform your landlord verbally and in writing of the problem as soon as possible. NOTE: Colorado landlord's repair and maintenance policies are usually set forth in the lease and can vary significantly¹.
- There are no state or federal laws that deal specifically with mold in rental units. The rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords with respect to mold can vary depending on the terms of the lease contract, the cause of the mold growth, and local (e.g. municipal) codes². We recommend that tenants and landlords communicate regarding possible mold or mildew issues and try to resolve the problem.

Possible health effects of mold

- Some people are more susceptible to mold such as those with asthma and allergies, the elderly, pregnant women, and the immune compromised (those with diabetes, HIV infection, liver disease, or those undergoing chemotherapy). Mold-related health problems also depend on the amount of exposure, length of exposure, and susceptibility of the individual exposed.
- Molds can cause allergic reactions similar to those caused by plant pollen (nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, sore throat, coughing, tightness in the chest, or wheezing among sensitive people). Symptoms usually disappear soon after the exposure ends without causing long-term effects.



What is "toxic" or "black" mold?

Many molds can produce potentially harmful substances, including allergens, mycotoxins, or other compounds. The term "toxic mold" is inaccurate – indoor molds are unlikely to be life-threatening. Much concern has been raised about a certain type of mold, *Stachybotrys chartarum*, or SC for short. SC is rare, white or greenish-black to black mold, that had once been referred to as a "killer". However, no definitive connection between the mold and serious illness or death has been identified. Current guidance of federal and professional organizations is that mold growth should be controlled in an appropriate manner, regardless of the type of mold³.

Testing for mold

You usually don't need to test for mold, because in most cases you can see or smell mold. Even a clean, dry house will have some mold spores, but not enough to cause health problems. In most cases, it's best to spend your time and money removing the mold and repairing any moisture problems.

Tenants and landlords should work cooperatively to investigate and correct moisture problems.

Check your rental or lease agreement to determine your responsibility to address daily maintenance issues and repairs.

Additional Resources:

¹The Colorado Renter's Guide 2014: http://www.aamdhq.org/clientuploads/pdfs/2013Colorado_Renters_Guide.pdf

²Colorado's Warranty of Habitability Act: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-resources/colorado-landlord-and-tenant-duties.aspx>

³Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/images/moldsci.pdf>

A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture, and Your Home (Environmental Protection Agency): <http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldguide.html>

About Mold and Moisture (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development): http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/healthy_homes/healthyhomes/mold