



GETTING RID OF MOLD AFTER FLOODING

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

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WHY IS MOLD A HEALTH CONCERN?

Mold is a type of fungus. *A flooded home provides ideal conditions for the growth of mold because of the moisture present.* Indoor mold can trigger allergies or allergy-like symptoms in the upper respiratory system. Although other, more serious problems may occur if people are exposed to very high levels of mold, the most common complaints are:

- Nasal and sinus congestion
- Cough
- Wheezing/breathing difficulties
- Sore throat
- Skin and eye irritation
- Upper respiratory infections (including sinus infections)

The effect of mold on people can vary widely, and long-term exposure to high levels of mold is unhealthy for anyone. The following groups of people may be at greater risk than others: children, the elderly, people with allergies and asthma, persons with weakened immune systems (for example, people with HIV infection, chemotherapy patients, organ transplant recipients). The Bureau of Public Health recommends that you consult a medical professional if you feel your health is being affected by mold. .

FINDING A MOLD PROBLEM

The easiest way to find a mold problem is to use your eyes and nose. If you see something that looks like mold, or you detect an earthy or musty smell, you should assume mold exists.

When you check for mold, be sure to:

- Look for visible mold growth (may appear cottony, velvety, granular, or leathery and have varied colors of white, gray, brown, black, yellow, green). Mold often appears as discoloration, staining, or fuzzy growth on the surface of building materials or furnishings.
- Search areas with musty odors.
- **Look** behind and underneath wall and floor coverings and furniture. It may be necessary to open up a wall cavity to find and clean up mold.

PROTECT YOURSELF

When mold is disturbed, it greatly increases the amount of mold present in the air. The following precautions are recommended when removing mold:

- Use rubber gloves
- Wear outer clothing (long sleeved shirts and long pants) that can be easily removed before leaving the work area
- If possible, wear a face mask
- Do not eat, drink or smoke in the contaminated area, since disease-causing organisms from sewage or floodwater may be present.

CLEAN-UP AND REMOVAL OF MOLD

1. **Identify and remove all sources of moisture.**
2. **Dry everything that got wet.** If possible, use fans and dehumidifiers, and move wet items away from walls and off floors. To avoid spreading mold, **do not** operate fans if mold is already visible.
3. **Remove and dispose of mold-contaminated materials.** Look for mold on items that absorbed moisture—sheet rock, insulation, plaster, carpet, carpet pad, ceiling tiles, wood (other than solid wood), and paper products. These items should be removed, bagged and thrown out, if they cannot be cleaned well.
4. **Clean items.** Mold can grow on materials like hard plastic, concrete, glass, or metal – but it can usually be removed with careful cleaning. Solid wood items can also be salvaged through cleaning, if they are structurally sound.
 - **Carefully wipe the item with a damp cloth or sponge,** to remove as much surface contamination as possible. Rinse cloth often with clean water. Rinse cleaning cloths and change water frequently and properly – they will be contaminated with mold.
 - **After wiping, thoroughly scrub all contaminated surfaces.** Use a stiff brush, hot water, and a non-ammonia soap/detergent or commercial cleaner.
 - **Rinse the surface or item – and the clean-up area -- with clean water.** Throw out the excess rinse water, and dry everything as quickly as possible.
5. **Disinfect surfaces.** After removing all visible mold and other soil from contaminated surfaces, disinfect the item. To disinfect, use the following guidelines, and contact the Bureau of Public Health for additional advice.
 - **Mix 1/4 to 1/2 cup bleach per gallon of water** and apply to surfaces where mold growth was visible before cleaning. Apply with a spray bottle, sponge, or cloth.
 - Do not rinse or wipe the bleach solution from the items or surfaces being treated — allow it to dry on the surface.
 - **Always handle bleach with caution.** Bleach can irritate the eyes, nose, throat, and skin. When working with bleach, always make sure the work area is well ventilated, and leave the area if your eyes or your breathing are affected. Use gloves and safety glasses to protect your skin and eyes.
 - **Never mix bleach with ammonia.**