

FAQ on Mold

1. What are molds and how do they reproduce?

Molds are fungi that are part of the natural environment. They reproduce by creating microscopic spores and, given the right conditions, will grow into mold in as little as 24-48 hours.

2. What do spores need in order to grow into mold?

Spores need food, moisture, and optimum temperatures to become mold. Food may be obtained from outdoor vegetation or materials such as paper, cardboard, wood or fabric. Moisture may be provided by a water leak, flooding, or water vapor (such as shower steam). The optimum temperature range for mold growth is 40-100°F (70-90°F is ideal).

3. What are the health and non-health impacts of mold?

The Institute of Medicine has linked indoor mold exposure to three health impacts:

- Upper respiratory tract symptoms, cough and wheeze (in otherwise healthy people)
- Exacerbated asthma symptoms in people diagnosed with asthma
- Hypersensitivity pneumonitis in susceptible individuals

Certain groups of people may be more at risk than others, with symptoms ranging from mild to severe.

Mold also causes damage to the physical surface or structure of a building.

4. Why isn't mold testing recommended?

The EPA and CDC do not recommend testing for mold. Testing may be expensive, and there are no accepted regulatory standards to define a tolerable mold quantity. In addition, the corrective measures taken are the same no matter what type of mold is present.

5. How can I prevent mold growth?

- Clean bathrooms, especially grout and tiles, with mold-killing products
- Make sure water drains away from your home during rain events to prevent flooding
- Dry wet or damp items completely, and remove flooded carpets
- Fix leaks right away
- Keep humidity levels in your home at 50% or under; use air conditioners or dehumidifiers if possible
- Provide adequate ventilation, especially in the kitchen and bathrooms

6. How can I clean up mold once it's in my home?

- Protect your eyes, nose, mouth, and skin with personal protective equipment
- Throw out anything that is wet and cannot be cleaned and dried completely within 24-48 hours
- Air out your home by opening doors and windows while cleaning
- Circulate air using fans and dehumidifiers if electricity is safe to use
- Don't mix cleaners, especially bleach and ammonia; this combination can cause toxic vapors
- Scrub surfaces with water and detergent to remove visible mold and dry right away – Don't use bleach!
- Don't cover mold with paint or caulking – fix the moisture problem completely and clean up the mold first.