



# MOLD

WHERE, WHY, WHAT TO DO.

# WHAT TO DO ABOUT **MOLD**

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE ON DISCOVERING,  
IDENTIFYING AND REMOVING MOLD

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**PART ONE**

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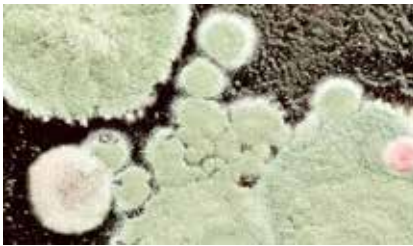
# **SYMPTOMS YOU HAVE MOLD**

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# SYMPTOM 1:

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*You can Visually see the mold.*



Some molds are difficult to distinguish from dirt. Here are a few key characteristics to help you tell the difference.

- LOCATION:** Mold will manifest in areas with high humidity and moisture.
- COLOR:** Green, pale blue, grey, white, or black.
- TEXTURE:** Bumpy, velvety, slimy, will smear if wiped. If you tried to clean “dirt” and found it smearing, it is likely mold.  
*\*Do not test potential mold by attempting to smear it.\**
- COLONIES:** Molds tends to group together in colonies

# SYMPTOM 2:

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*You smell an unusual odor.*

Mold development is often accompanied by sour, musty odors. We have heard it compared to smelly socks, a wet towel left in a gym bag, or a wet dog.

# SYMPTOM 3:

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*Your allergies are worse at home.*

If sniffles are on the rise for you or your family, it could mean you have mold developing in your home.

- *Are you a regular allergy sufferer?*
- *Have your allergy symptoms developed relatively recently?*
- *Are your allergies worse when you are at home?*

If allergies are a new experience for you and your family, or if your allergies are worse when you are at home, it could be symptomatic of mold.



# SYMPTOM 4:

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*You have water damage in your home.*



If you have water damage from a roof leak, a malfunctioning appliance, ruptured piping, etc., there is a good chance you have mold. Mold can develop within 48 hours of the occurrence of water damage, especially if the area around the water damage is not properly dehydrated. However, the mold may not be visible or give off a foul odor right away.

## **SIGNS THAT YOUR WATER DAMAGE HAS LED TO MOLD INCLUDE:**

- *Discolored materials in the water damaged area*
- *Cracking, peeling, or bubbling paint/wallpaper*
- *Wood rot or decay*



**PART TWO**

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# HOW TO FIND AND IDENTIFY MOLD

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# LOCATING MOLD:

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*Mold will most likely develop in moist, humid areas of your home.*



**BASEMENTS:** Especially around plumbing, water heater, and along outside walls (*look for condensation*)

**CRAWLSPACES:** Standing water, leaking plumbing, condensation, underneath plumbing appliance



**ATTICS:** Recent roof leaks and even old water damage contribute to the development of mold. You may even see mold around insulation.



**BATHROOMS & KITCHENS:** Under sinks, in and around showers/tubs, anywhere near plumbing (especially if leaks or condensation are present)



# IDENTIFYING MOLD:

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**!** *Mold is hazardous to your health.*

*If you have located what you believe is mold, but you're not sure, the best thing you can do is contact a professional mold remediation company.*

## **A NOTE ABOUT DIY TESTING:**

*There are a lot of products available on the market for DIY mold testing. However, these home testing kits are usually not as effective because they only confirm the suspicion that a mold issue exists, without actually providing any valuable information. Verifying that mold is present is not nearly as important as figuring out what is causing it and then taking the steps to repair that issue and stop the mold growth.*

## *It can be difficult to distinguish between mold and mildew.*

They are often similar in appearance and odor. A few key differences:

**COLOR:** Mold is usually black, blue, red, or green. *(Mold can be white, so texture is an important identifying component)*

Mildew is usually white or grey.

**TEXTURE:** Mold is usually fuzzy or slimy.

Mildew is usually powdery or downy.

Whether you have mold or mildew, the issue must be addressed as soon as possible. Mildew removal can be a DIY project, but you should be 100% sure it's not mold before you begin the removal process.



**PART THREE**

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# **WHAT TO DO ONCE YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED MOLD**

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# MOLD DO'S AND DON'TS

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## *If you have mold don't...*

- Touch it.** If you must go near mold, wear gloves and a face mask.
- Bleach it.** A common myth is that mold can be cleared with bleach. This is simply not true. Even if bleaching the mold makes it disappear, without proper remediation, invisible mold spores will remain and redevelop.
- Paint over it.** Painting over mold does nothing to reduce its health hazard. Furthermore, delaying remediation will only cost homeowners more in the long run.
- Underestimate it.** We cannot overstate how hazardous mold is to the occupants of your home. Beyond allergies, people suffer long term health effects due to mold exposure. The best thing you can do for your family and your property is to have mold remediated as soon as possible.

## *If you have mold do...*

- Assess the damage.** You may need to quarantine rooms directly affected by the mold. If there is a significant amount of mold (multiple rooms, overbearing odors, sick family members), you may need to evacuate your home until the issue is resolved.
- Correct the source.** The moisture is coming from somewhere. Repair leaks, water damage, and humidity issues as soon as it is possible (and safe) to prevent the continued development and eventual redevelopment of mold.
- Remember:** ***What you can see may only be the tip of the mold problem.***

# CAN YOU DIY MOLD REMOVAL?

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*Yes and no, and here's why.*



If the affected area is ***less than 10 square feet (3ft x 3ft)***, it is possible to clean it yourself. However, if done improperly, it could be hazardous to your health and further exacerbate your mold problem. If you have determined that the area affected is small enough to clean yourself, ***meaning you are absolutely certain that there is not more mold than what you can see***, follow these steps:

- 1. Wear gloves, goggles, and a face mask.**
- 2. Scrub affected area with warm water mixed with detergent.**
- 3. Bag, seal, and dispose of all materials that came in contact with the mold.**

Mold permeates below the surface of porous and absorbent materials like carpets, some types of tile, drywall, and insulation, ruling them out as candidates for DIY mold removal.



**PART FOUR**

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# **CHOOSING A MOLD REMEDIATION PROFESSIONAL**

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## *Important questions to ask mold removal companies*

Because of the risk to your family's health if done improperly, choosing the right mold remediation professional is critical. When researching mold removal companies, it is important to answer these questions:

### **How is this company certified?**

Mold professionals are certified by the Association of Specialists in Cleaning and Restoration, the Institution of Inspection, Cleaning, and Restoration, or the American Indoor Air Quality Council.

### **Is this company reputable?**

Referrals, references, and recommendations are important to consider when choosing a mold remediation company.

### **Is this company trustworthy?**

It is unethical for the same company to both test and remove mold. Investigate your mold professional's testing and remediation process.

### **Cheaper is not necessarily better.**

Choose a mold remediation company that will thoroughly correct the issue. If not properly remediated, mold can return and require another expensive removal project.

### **Is this company versatile?**

During the remediation process we often find other issues that require correction: water damage, asbestos, etc. Additionally, it is important to choose a professional who will correct the source of the mold as well.



**PART FIVE**

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# **MOLD PREVENTION**

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# MOLD PREVENTION

*Stop mold before it invades your home.*

After an expensive and potentially lengthy remediation process, the last thing homeowners want is to repeat the experience a short time later. Though it is impossible to guarantee mold will not develop later, there are some steps you can take to significantly reduce the chances of mold returning.

## **Fix the source of the mold.**

Mold requires moisture to develop and thrive. In addition to fixing any water damage, leaks, appliances, etc., proper ventilation and drainage in your crawlspace is vital for preventing the redevelopment of mold. If crawlspace mold is an ongoing issue, it is worth considering having it sealed and conditioned to reduce moisture.

## **Lower your home's humidity.**

Consider installing whole-house dehumidification or placing dehumidifying units in moisture prone areas of your home. Additional tips to prevent moisture include:

- **Ensure air conditioning drip pans are clean and drain lines are unobstructed.**
- **Vent moisture producing appliances outside.** (*clothes dryers, stoves, kerosene heaters, etc.*)
- **Use the bathroom fan or crack a window when showering.**
- **Cover cold water pipes with pipe insulation to reduce condensation.**

## **Reduce the moisture invading your home.**

Address and correct drainage issues around your home and yard, especially ponding in and around your crawlspace or basement. Keep gutters clean and free of debris to avoid roof damage, and replace missing shingles immediately after they are damaged. Old, drafty windows allow air and moisture to invade your home. Replace old windows with high quality, energy efficient units that block moisture and condensation.

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