

MOLD

What is Mold?

Mold is a common living organism that grows like a plant or bacteria. Mildew is the same thing as mold. Mold spreads by spores - microscopic 'seeds' that float through the air. When spores land on a wet area (like a wet rug or a wall or ceiling with a leak) they grow into new mold. If there is no moisture, mold cannot grow.

Can mold cause health problems?

There is no such thing as "toxic mold" but some people can be very allergic to mold. Depending on your sensitivity, exposure to any type of mold could cause mild problems (eye irritation, runny nose, coughing, sore throat) or serious health problems like difficulty breathing or asthma attacks.

Should I test for Mold?

There is no recommended test for mold or standard for what is a safe level of mold. If you can see mold or smell mold (musty odor), then you have mold and need to take action. If you find evidence of frequent water damage, then it is very likely that you have mold. Call the Environmental Hazards Program at 617-534-5966 if you are worried about mold in your home.

What should I do about mold in my home?

The first thing to do is find the source of the water and stop it - mold cannot grow without water. Next, you have to clean up the mold. Remember to wear gloves, safety goggles, and a mask or respirator to protect your health when cleaning up mold. Do not just paint over mold unless you fix the water problem first - it will just grow back. If there is too much mold or water damage, cut out and throw away moldy dry-wall or plaster. Above all, know when it is time to call in the professionals.



- ◆ **Cleaning walls, floors and hard surfaces:** Scrub the area with a disinfectant (1 cup of non-chlorine bleach in a gallon of water) and let it dry completely.
- ◆ **Cleaning carpets, furniture, and clothing:** Small items should be taken to a professional drycleaner. If the item is too big to be washed (furniture, wall-to-wall carpet, etc.), professional steam cleaning or upholstery cleaning may work.
- ◆ **What if the mold comes back:** If mold grows back then you may have to throw out the moldy item.
- ◆ **If you can still smell mold, it is not clean**

Prevent mold growth!

Exhaust fans and open windows can be used in damp areas like bathrooms. Wipe down damp walls after showering. Stop moisture before it starts by fixing leaks as soon as you find them. That way, mold will not have time to grow.



Boston Public Health Commission
 1010 Massachusetts Avenue
 Boston, MA 02118
www.bphc.org
 John Auerbach, Executive Director
 Thomas M. Menino, Mayor

Please call the Environmental Hazards
 Program for more information
617-534-5966