

# Mold



Clean Up,  
Removal, &  
Safety Concerns



## What is Mold?

Molds are fungi that can be found both indoors and outdoors. It's not known how many species of molds actually exist but estimates range from tens of thousands to perhaps more than three hundred thousand. Molds grow best in warm, damp, and humid conditions, and spread/reproduce by making spores.

Mold will not grow unless water or moisture is present. Growth is more likely and rapid if there are water leaks, spills, high humidity, or condensation.

Mold appears in any color imaginable and often has a musty odor. Most times mold can be cleaned off hard surfaces, however, porous objects like carpeting, wood or fabric, may need to be thrown away.

## Why is it in my house?

Visible mold in your house indicates that there is some sort of water problem or leak. To reduce damage and expenses, it is best to fix water problems within 24-48 hours of them occurring.



## What are the Symptoms?

Some people are sensitive to mold and may experience a variety of symptoms such as nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, wheezing or skin irritation. About one out of ten people are allergic to mold and may experience coughing, congestion, or shortness of breath.

It is important to remember that not everyone will be affected by the presence of mold or react to it in the same way.

Those with higher health risks include:

- Infants and children
- Elderly persons
- Immune compromised people with HIV infection, cancer, liver disease, or organ transplant
- Pregnant women
- Individuals with existing respiratory conditions, such as allergies, COPD, or asthma

Even if no one in your home has these health risks, it is important to quickly identify and correct any moisture sources before mold develops.

## Should I be concerned?

Most people will never have a health problem from being exposed to small amounts of mold. However, when there is a large amount of airborne mold present, it can cause allergic reactions, asthma episodes, infections, and other respiratory problems. Exposure to high mold levels can also lead to allergies.

Care should be taken when cleaning up mold so it doesn't spread to other areas. Most serious mold exposures are in occupational environments, not in homes, schools or office settings. If you have mold growing in your home, steps should be taken immediately to have it removed (see page 4).

## Other indoor air problems

It's important to remember that the symptoms just mentioned can come from many other sources in the home such as:

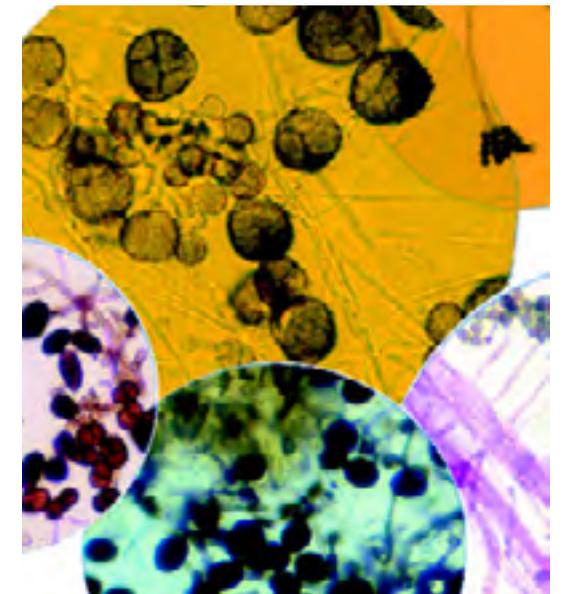
- Dust Mites
- Cockroaches
- Pet fur and saliva
- Tobacco smoke
- Cleaning chemicals
- Pollen
- Perfumes, air fresheners
- Pesticides

## What is Toxic Mold?

Some molds produce toxins, mainly for the purpose of killing other mold species. You have to touch, inhale, or swallow these molds in order to be affected by the toxin. **Just because a mold is present does not mean that a toxin is present.**

## Can my doctor test me for mold exposure?

There are no reliable medical tests for mold exposure. An allergy specialist can test for allergies for only a few of the most common molds.



# Testing for Mold

If you can see or smell mold, you already know you have a mold and moisture problem. **Testing for mold is not generally recommended.** Regardless if the test identifies the type of mold present, it will still need to be cleaned up as soon as possible. In cases of minor mold contamination, small isolated areas (2 to 10 sq. ft.) can be addressed by using the clean-up recommendations found on the next page.

In cases of more extensive contamination, testing may be helpful. Some private environmental consulting firms may have the ability to conduct home assessments and sample for mold identification. Look in the phone directory or online for "Environmental Consultants." A list of Water Damage/ Mold Consultants can also be found on page 5.

Here are a few tips when looking for an environmental consulting firm:

- Ask if the company has experience with mold testing.
- Get several price quotes.
- Ask if they are familiar with the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) document entitled **Field Guide for the Determination of Biological Contaminants in Environmental Samples**. This document provides guidelines for the sampling of mold for indoor environments.



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# Mold Clean Up

1. Find and fix the water problem. This is the most important step.
2. Dry anything that is wet before mold begins to grow. Generally within 24 hours.
  - Start as soon as possible.
  - Move wet items away from walls and off floors.
  - For larger problems, use fans and dehumidifiers.
3. Get rid of moldy items.
  - Cover with plastic and discard moldy clothes, fabric covered furniture, drywall, insulation, plaster, carpet/carpet padding, ceiling tiles, wood products (other than solid wood), and paper products.
  - If sewage has been in the house, discard all soiled items.
4. Clean solid surfaces.
  - Scrub all moldy surfaces using a stiff brush, hot water, and a non-ammonia soap or detergent.
  - Collect excess cleaning liquid with a mop, sponge, or wet/dry vacuum.
  - Rinse area with clean water and remove rinse water.
5. Disinfect surfaces (if desired).
  - Mix ½ cup bleach per gallon of water. **DO NOT MIX BLEACH WITH AMMONIA**
  - Spray or sponge onto moldy areas.
  - Allow to sit on the surface for 15 minutes.
  - Collect any remaining bleach solution with a sponge, mop, or wet/dry vacuum.
6. Be on MOLD ALERT!
  - Continue looking for signs of moisture problems.
  - Fix moisture problems.
  - Look for return of mold growth.
  - Clean up as soon as you see mold.

## Protect yourself and others

During mold clean up, wear:

- Long sleeves and long pants – put directly in laundry after use.
- Rubber gloves.
- Eye goggles.
- N-95 rated “dust” mask; available at hardware stores.
- If anyone in the home has asthma or a chronic disease – do cleanup when they are out of the house.

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# Choosing a mold clean up professional

When choosing a mold clean up professional be sure to get estimates from three different companies. Look for companies under **Disaster, Environmental, Restoration Services, or Mold Remediation** in the phone directory or online.

## Be Sure to Ask:

- What experience they have.
- What courses they have taken.
- What mold remediation certification(s) the manager has; and If a manager who is certified will be on the job site at all times when work is being done.

A written agreement should be provided by any company that you hire. It should state, in detail, the work to be done, start and end dates, the materials to be used, and the price breakdown for both labor and materials. Review it carefully before signing. Never pay for all repairs in advance and don't pay cash.

Included here is a list of local mold remediation companies. This is not a complete list and other companies may be available. This list is not to be considered an endorsement by the Medina County Health Department.

**ACRT Inc.**  
2545 Bailey Road  
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio 44221  
800-622-2562

**American Analytical Labs Inc.**  
840 S. Main Street  
Akron, Ohio 44311  
330-535-1300

**Auburn Environmental**  
24850 Aurora Road #C  
Cleveland, Ohio 44146  
440-786-1943

**Auburn Environmental**  
520 S. Main Street, Suite 2513  
Akron, Ohio 44311  
330-253-1001

**Mold Protection Services Inc.**  
3593 Medina Road - Suite 245  
Medina, Ohio 44256  
330-721-4506 • 800-721-4506

**Rainbow International  
Restoration & Cleaning Experts**  
P.O. Box 936  
Medina, Ohio 44256  
330-723-7269

**ServPro of Medina County**  
400 N. State Road  
Medina, Ohio 44256  
330-722-4343 • 800-933-7179  
24 HR CELL 330-635-1436

# References

American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) - contact at [www.aiha.org](http://www.aiha.org) for a list of accredited mold testing labs.

Ohio Indoor Air Quality Coalition - 800-200-2526

Minnesota Department of Health - Environmental Health Division, Indoor Air Unit

# Other Resources

**Akron Regional Air Quality Management District**  
800-589-2480 • 330-375-2480 • 330-375-2402

**Mold In Homes:** Minnesota Department of Health's very informative web site on mold for homeowners and tenants.  
Available at [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/mold/index.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/mold/index.html).

Ohio Department of Health Indoor Environments Section. Phone 800-200-2526. Provides advice and information on indoor air hazards.

United States Environmental Protection Agency.  
Visit at <http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldguide.html>.



**we can also answer  
many of your questions**

call 330-723-9523 • 888-723-9688 option 3  
or visit our website at [www.medinahealth.org](http://www.medinahealth.org)



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