

# 7

## Things You Should Know About Mold

- 1. It's ALIVE.** Mold is a fungus that can grow anywhere, especially on moist surfaces. It enters your home through cracks, vents, windows and doors.
- 2. Mold can make you sick.** It can cause (or worsen) breathing problems, fungal infections or allergic reactions such as wheezing, coughing, itchy nose, sore throat and sinus congestion.
- 3. Use your eyes and nose to detect mold.** It's fuzzy and can grow white, green, black, brown or orange. If you smell an earthy, musty smell, you have mold.
- 4. Clean it up...FAST!** The only way to get rid of mold is to clean and dry the area. For large areas, consider a professional service. For porous surfaces such as carpeting, furniture, mattresses or wallpaper, throw it out!
- 5. Protect yourself during cleanup.** Mold spores can travel through the air. Protect yourself with proper clothing and gear.
- 6. Reduce humidity to 30%-60%.** Use air conditioners or fans to circulate air. In basements or crawlspaces, use vapor barriers on dirt floors. Consider installing a dehumidifier, fix all leaks and remove condensation.
- 6. Keep it clean, keep it dry.** Moisture grows mold. High moisture areas include bathrooms, kitchens, basements, attics, crawlspaces and laundry rooms. To control mold, keep it clean and keep it dry.



Margaret Harris, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor – Health with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Little Rock.

Pursuant to 7 CFR § 15.3, the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services (including employment) without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, sexual preference, pregnancy or any other legally protected status, and is an equal opportunity institution.

MP490-PD-10-10N

MP490

There's a  
fungus  
among us  
What You Should  
Know About Mold

U of A UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS  
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE



## Preventing Mold = Controlling Moisture

The best way to prevent mold growth in your home, school or business is to keep it as clean and dry as possible. You don't need to hire an inspector to test for mold unless the source is not clear. The following tips may help prevent some common mold problems.

- Keep humidity between 30-60%. Use air conditioners and dehumidifiers to keep air dry.
- Watch for condensation and wet spots. Fix leaks immediately.
- Increase air circulation by using fans. Open windows if it is not humid out.
- Limit use of humidifiers and kerosene heaters.
- Install gutters; make sure water is flowing away from your house, not inside.
- Make sure crawlspaces and basements are well ventilated. Install thick plastic covering on a dirt floor.
- No carpets in high humidity areas (i.e., kitchen and bathrooms)
- Dry clothes completely and rer from dryer promptly.

## What if there's a leak or flood? Preventing Damage

Whether or not the water damage may be covered by your insurance policy, it is important to act quickly to prevent further damage to your home.

- Immediately stop the source of leak or flooding.
- Remove excess water with mops or wet vacs. If the damage is significant, consider contacting a water extraction company for immediate action.
- Dry damp or wet items within 24 to 48 hours. Whenever possible, move wet materials to a dry, well-ventilated area or outside to speed drying.
- Protect or move repairable and undamaged items to prevent further damage.
- Increase circulation in and around wet areas by opening closet and cabinet doors, moving furniture away from walls and running fans.
- Pull up wet carpet as soon as possible. If necessary, remove wallboard and flooring materials to dry out those areas.
- Don't throw away removed or damaged materials until instructed by your insurance company.

### • Keep all receipts, photos and other relevant documents.

- Contact your insurance company, if applicable. NOTE: The sooner the affected areas dry out and the source of the leak is repaired, the better your chances of minimizing damage to your property. If the water cannot be removed and the area dried promptly and efficiently, consider contacting a water extraction company for immediate action.



## Clean It and Dry It – fast!

If you have mold, find and stop the moisture problem. After a flood, fire or water leak, walls and floors that were soaked for more than a few hours may have absorbed large amounts of water. Insulation and wooden studs may be wet for two or more feet above the flood level because of absorption and wicking.

### Protect yourself from spores in the air.

- Wear disposable rubber gloves, goggles, long-sleeved shirts and pants, and a mask or respirator.
- Ventilate the area.

### To clean small areas:

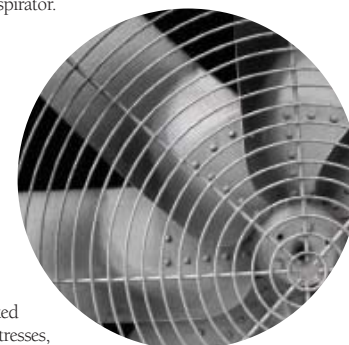
- Mix  $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$  cup bleach to 1 quart water and a little bit of detergent (without ammonia).
- Allow to dry, then repeat if necessary.
- **Never mix bleach and ammonia!**
- Keep areas clean and dry.
- Monitor regularly.

### Throw away:

- Porous material that has been soaked with water such as insulation, mattresses, draperies, sofas and carpeting.

### Contact a professional if:

- You have respiratory health problems.
- Anyone in the home is elderly, immune-compromised, has existing respiratory problems, or is a child.
- There is damage to more than 10 sq. feet.



For more information:

[www.epa.gov/mold/mold\\_remediation](http://www.epa.gov/mold/mold_remediation)

or contact your local county extension office.

