



FEMA

Mold . . . A Growing Threat

FLOODED HOMES MAY HARBOR MOLD PROBLEM

Mold growth is likely to occur in homes after flooding. It's very important to clean and thoroughly dry any areas of the home that have gotten wet from floodwaters. Failure to remove contaminated materials and to reduce moisture and humidity can present serious long-term health risks, according to the Office of Indoor Air Quality at the Environmental Protection Agency.

Mold - What Is It?

Molds are simple microscopic organisms found virtually everywhere, indoors and outdoors. When molds are present in large quantities they can cause allergic symptoms similar to those caused by plant pollen.

Should I Be Concerned About Mold In My Home?

Yes, if the contamination is extensive. When airborne mold spores are present in large numbers they can cause allergic reactions, asthma episodes, infections, and other respiratory problems.

Who Is At Greatest Risk When Exposed To Mold?

The following individuals are at higher risk for adverse health affects from molds:

- Infants, children and the elderly
- Immune compromised individuals (people with HIV infection, liver disease, in chemotherapy, etc)
- Pregnant women
- Individuals with existing respiratory conditions such as allergies, multiple chemical sensitivity, and asthma

People with these conditions should consult a physician if they are experiencing health problems.

Typical symptoms reported from mold exposure include respiratory problems (like wheezing and asthma attacks), burning or watery eyes, nose or throat irritations, skin irritations like rashes or hives, and nervous system disorders like headaches, memory loss and mood changes.

What Can I Save? What Should I Toss?

Porous materials can trap molds. Items such as paper, rags, wallboard, and rotten wood should be thrown out. Harder materials such as glass, plastic and metal can be kept after they are cleaned and disinfected.

Removing Moldy Materials

- Wear a filter mask and gloves to avoid contact with the mold.
- Remove porous materials (ex: ceiling tiles, Sheet-rock, carpeting, wood products.)
- Carpeting can be a difficult problem - drying does not remove the dead spores. If there is heavy mold, disposal of the carpet should be considered.
- Allow areas to dry 2 to 3 days before replacing damaged materials
- If Sheet-rock, or wallboard, is flooded, remove all Sheet-rock to at least 12 inches above the high water mark.

General Mold Clean-Up Procedures

- Identify and correct the moisture source. Remove all water and fix any leaks before cleaning.
- Clean, disinfect, and dry the moldy area.
- Bag and dispose of any material that has moldy residue, such as rags, paper, leaves or debris.

Soap Cleanup

- Wear protective gloves and a filter mask.
- Use non-ammonia soap or detergent, or a commercial cleaner in hot water. Scrub the entire area affected by the mold.
- Use a stiff brush or cleaning pad.
- Rinse with clean water.

Disinfect Surfaces

- Wear a filter mask and protective gloves when using disinfectants.
- After thorough cleaning and rinsing, disinfect the area with household bleach (1/4 cup bleach per gallon of water).
- Never mix bleach with ammonia - the fumes are toxic!
- Let disinfected areas dry naturally overnight to kill all the mold.

Be aware that exposure to mold can occur during cleanup. To minimize exposure, consider using a breathing mask or respirator, wear rubber gloves and take breaks in a well-ventilated area.