

---

# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

---



29 Hazen Drive, Concord, New Hampshire 03301 • (603) 271-3503 • [www.des.nh.gov](http://www.des.nh.gov)

---

ARD-IAQ-1

2007

## Mold in the Home - Common Sense Steps for Clean-Up

**What are molds?** Molds are microscopic organisms that live on plant or animal matter. They aid in the breakdown of dead material and recycle nutrients in the environment. Present virtually everywhere, they can be found growing on organic materials, such as soil, foods, and plant matter. To reproduce, molds produce spores, which spread through air, water, and by insects. These spores act like seeds and can form new mold growth if the conditions are right.

**What causes mold to grow?** Mold will grow and multiply under the right conditions, needing only *sufficient* moisture (e.g., in the form of very high humidity, condensation, or water from a leaking pipe, etc.) and *organic material* (e.g., ceiling tile, drywall, paper, or natural fiber carpet padding). The key to preventing mold growth is to control all moisture problems. No moisture, no mold!



*Mold damage on carpeting, baseboard and wallboard.*

Mold can be a concern in the home and should not be allowed to grow. Mold contamination may cause health problems, as well as damage to the home.

**Should I be concerned about mold in my home?** Exposure to mold may cause harmful health effects so any mold growth in the home should be cleaned up as soon as possible. The most common health effects from exposure to mold are allergic responses from breathing mold spores. Allergic responses can come from exposure to dormant, as well as to living, mold spores. It is difficult to say how much mold is too

much, as reactions to allergens can vary greatly depending on individual sensitivity. Allergy related symptoms of exposure to moldy or damp environments are upper respiratory in nature and may include nasal congestion, post nasal drip, throat clearing, and itchy, watery eyes. Exposure to mold may trigger or exacerbate asthma.

People that may be more susceptible to health problems from exposure to moldy or damp environments include:

- Individuals with current respiratory sensitivities, such as allergies, asthma, emphysema, or other lung and/or heart diseases.
- Individuals with a compromised immune system, such as HIV/AIDS infection, organ transplant patients, or chemotherapy patients.

**Should I have my home tested for mold?** Laboratory results of mold sampling/testing are difficult to interpret, partially because there is very limited information about what level of mold exposure is associated with health effects. Sampling can be expensive. Overall, the best practice is to *promptly clean up any mold growth in your home and to correct the water problem that caused it.*

**Cleaning Up Mold:** How to Get Rid of It. The first step to mold clean-up is to control the moisture problem. The source of the water must be identified and corrected. Run a dehumidifier and keep basement windows closed. Discard porous materials with mold growth such as drywall, carpeting, paper and ceiling tiles. All wet materials must be thoroughly cleaned and dried within 48 to 72 hours of becoming wet. If that is not possible, they should be discarded. When in doubt, throw it out.



*Look for water stains on walls, ceilings, woodwork and other surfaces.*

Mold growing on hard surfaces such as wood and concrete should first be cleaned with regular detergent and water, then rinsed and dried. Small areas can be scrubbed with a cleaning rag that is wetted with diluted detergent. The cleaned areas should then be disinfected with a diluted solution of bleach. To disinfect, mix one part bleach with ten parts water, mist the area, and let dry. When using a bleach solution, ensure that enough fresh air is available because bleach may cause eye, nose, or throat irritation, and never mix bleach with other chemicals. Rubber gloves, a medium efficiency filter dust mask and goggles are recommended to be worn during mold clean up. For a large mold problem or if you are highly sensitive to mold, an experienced professional should do the work. Continue to recheck cleaned areas for new mold growth and signs of moisture. This may indicate the need for further cleaning, repairs or material removal.

#### **Additional clean up guidance available at:**

NH Department of Environmental Services, Environmental Health Programs, Indoor Air Quality, [www.des.nh.gov/ard/ehp/iaq/index.html](http://www.des.nh.gov/ard/ehp/iaq/index.html). Also, *MOLD in Your Home? Protect Your Health and Investment* brochure, [http://www.des.nh.gov/pdf/MOLD\\_in\\_Homes\\_Web.pdf](http://www.des.nh.gov/pdf/MOLD_in_Homes_Web.pdf).

US Environmental Protection Agency - Indoor Air - Mold, <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/>.

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene - Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Disease Epidemiology *Guidelines on Assessment and Remediation of Fungi in Indoor Environments* - [www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/epi/moldrpt1.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/epi/moldrpt1.shtml). Also, *Facts About Mold* - [www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/epi/epimold.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/epi/epimold.shtml)

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Environmental Health - [www.cdc.gov/mold/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mold/default.htm)

Minnesota Department of Health, Environmental Health in Minnesota, *Mold in Homes* - [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/mold/index.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/mold/index.html)

California Department of Health Services, Indoor Air Quality Info Sheet, *Mold in My Home: What Do I Do?* - [www.cal-iaq.org/mold0107.htm](http://www.cal-iaq.org/mold0107.htm)

**Further questions can be directed to:**

NH Department of Environmental Services  
Environmental Health Programs  
Indoor Air Quality Section  
PO Box 95  
29 Hazen Drive  
Concord, NH 03302-0095  
(603) 271-1370  
[IAQ@des.state.nh.us](mailto:IAQ@des.state.nh.us)