



Mold in the Home and Workplace

Mold is a part of the natural environment but indoor molds can have a negative impact on air quality. Mold spores that land in a wet or damp spot will begin growing in 24-48 hours and can produce allergens, irritants, and in some cases, potential toxic substances called mycotoxins.

Research on mold and its health effects is ongoing but we know it has the potential to cause upper respiratory infections, sore throat, nasal/sinus congestion, wheezing, eye and skin irritations, nose bleeds, asthma attacks, muscle stiffness and severe fatigue. Some people are more sensitive to the effects of mold than others.

The key to mold control is moisture control. Water and moisture can enter a structure by: plumbing leaks, sweating pipes, rain entering in roofs or windows, over-watering landscape or potted plants, wet foundations, improper exterior drainage, poor ventilation, high humidity, malfunctioning or poorly maintained heating or air conditioning units.

If you have mold growth in your home or business, you must fix the moisture problem and remove the mold. Dead mold may still cause allergic reactions, so it is not enough to simply kill the mold, it must be completely removed.

Who should do the cleaning depends on several factors. If the moldy area is less than 10 square feet, you may be able clean it yourself. Use water and strong detergent and dry completely. During mold removal, the mold spore count in the air can increase 10 to 1,000 fold so take precautions.

To avoid breathing mold or mold spores, you may want to wear an N-95 respirator, which is available at many hardware stores. Wear rubber gloves and unventilated goggles to avoid getting mold or mold spores in your eyes. Wear clothes that can be cleaned with bleach or thrown away when finished.

If you remediate your home yourself, you should have your heating and air conditioning system inspected by a professional for any evidence of mold contamination. Generally, once mold begins growing in a building, its airborne spores will circulate into these systems and contaminate the system's ducts and mechanical equipment.

Hire an experienced mold remediator if the area is larger than ten square feet, if the mold damage was caused by sewage or other contaminated water, if you have health concerns, if you suspect your HVAC system may be contaminated, if you aren't sure how to clean an item or surface, or you suspect you have hidden mold behind walls, underneath wallpaper, under flooring, or in ceilings. Porous or absorbent materials, such as ceiling tiles, wallboard and carpet, may have to be replaced.

Compleat Environmental Services is the indoor air quality division of Compleat Restorations. For a free estimate on mold remediation by a certified mold remediation specialist, or a free estimate on commercial duct system cleaning, call (800) 478-4150. Or, visit www.CompleatRestorations.com for information on professional drying services, disaster restoration, duct cleaning, mold prevention and remediation.

Information and recommendations from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Center for Disease Control regarding indoor air quality and mold can be found at www.epa.gov/iaq/molds and <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/mold/>.



