

Facts About Mold

Mold and mildew are common names for a large group of naturally occurring fungi. Mold becomes a problem inside our homes and buildings when leaks or other moisture problems allow it to grow unchecked.

How do I know if I have a mold problem?

A mold problem can usually be seen or smelled. It often appears as slightly furry, discolored, or slimy patches that will increase in size as the mold grows. Molds produce a musty odor that may be the first indication of a problem. Anywhere excessive moisture accumulates indoors, mold growth can occur.

Many hardware stores sell mold test kits; however, these are rarely useful because there are no well-established standards for mold detection and what levels of mold present a threat. The test kits also vary as to what they deem to be acceptable levels of mold. Further, it is important to understand that mold is naturally occurring so there will always be some mold spores present.

Can mold make my family sick?

Health effects vary depending on the types of mold, severity of the problem, length of exposure and individual sensitivity. Any mold can cause an allergic response from breathing mold spores. These responses include hay fever or asthma and irritation of the eyes, nose, throat or lungs. People with existing conditions or more severe symptoms should seek medical care.

How do I clean up mold?

The critical step to mold clean up is to control the moisture problem. No cleanup can proceed until the area is dry. A 10% bleach solution will remove the surface mold but is a temporary fix and must be used carefully. Porous materials with extensive mold growth should be discarded, such as drywall, carpeting, paper, fabric and ceiling tiles. Hard surfaces (e.g. wood and concrete) can be cleaned. Small areas can be scrubbed with a cleaning rag wetted with diluted detergent. Rubber gloves and a dust mask are recommended for jobs other than routine cleaning.

For large mold problems or for people highly sensitive to mold, an experienced professional should do the work. These private companies may advertise as environmental consultants, mold inspectors or healthy homes consultants. In Oklahoma, there is no state license or certification for mold testing and clean-up companies or individuals who offer these services.

There are no current regulations or standardized acceptable limits for mold, and Oklahoma does not have an agency with jurisdiction over mold. Websites with additional information on mold, possible health effects and clean up recommendations include:

Environmental Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/mold>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/mold/faqs.htm>

