



Mold is a general term used to describe certain types of fungi. Wherever there is moisture, mold can grow. It can grow on food, building materials, upholstery, clothes and other surfaces. There are many different types of molds that vary in color and appearance. No species of mold is named “black mold.”

Exposure to mold can impact your health. How you may react to mold depends on several factors including the type and amount of mold, the amount of time you are exposed, and your overall health. Talk with your health care provider if you have health concerns or questions.

## Preventing Mold Growth

You can prevent mold growth by fixing water and moisture problems in your home or building.

Here are some steps you can take to prevent mold growth:

- Fix leaky roofs, gutters, windows and pipes.
- Clean and dry wet materials thoroughly and quickly (within 48 hours) after flooding.
- Keep relative humidity levels indoors between 40 and 60%.
- Vent clothes dryers and kitchen and bathroom fans to the outdoors.
- Use a dehumidifier in damp areas and empty it frequently.
- Keep water away from your home or building’s foundation by using downspout extensions, drainage systems, sump pumps or by making sure your yard slopes away from it. Talk to a professional to discuss the best system for your home or building.
- Use the right type and amount of insulation in areas above the ceiling and in exterior walls.

## Testing for Mold

In most cases, testing for mold is **not** necessary or recommended because:

- Understanding the results can be difficult because there are no standards to compare the results to.
- Test results cannot be used to say a building is “safe” or “unsafe.”
- No matter how much or what kind of mold is in your home or building, the action steps are the same: remove the moldy items, dry the space out, and fix the water or moisture problem.

## Protecting Yourself from Mold

- Wear protective clothing, disposable masks (N-95), gloves and goggles.
- Do not let children, people with breathing problems, and people with weakened immune systems clean up mold.
- Use portable air cleaners with HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filters. [Use the EPA's Guide to Air Cleaners.](#)
- Minimize spreading dust, debris and mold to other areas of your home or building by using plastic sheeting to separate the moldy area. [Learn more about containment from the EPA.](#)

## Fixing a Mold Problem

To fix a mold problem, you must fix the water or moisture problem. If the water or moisture problem is not corrected, the mold will come back. When you see mold growth:

- Clean moldy items that do not absorb water (glass, plastic, marble, granite, ceramic, tile, metal) with soap and water. Cleaning with soap and water helps physically remove mold from surfaces.
- Wash soft items that can be laundered (clothes or linens).
- Throw away and replace materials that easily absorb water and cannot be laundered or washed (cushions, mattresses, drywall, carpet, insulation, pillows, upholstered furniture, ceiling tiles).
- Vacuum all clean surfaces with a HEPA vacuum.

## Hiring a Contractor

- General contractors and home inspectors often can identify mold and moisture problems. General contractors may also be able to fix the water or moisture problems that are causing the mold growth.
- There are no federal or Vermont certifications or licenses for mold clean up.
- If the moldy area is less than 10 square feet (roughly 3 feet by 3 feet), you can clean it up yourself in most cases.
- If mold is covering more than 10 square feet, you may want to hire a contractor that specializes in mold cleanup.
- Ask the contractor to follow clean up guidance from organizations like the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) or the [Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification](#) (IICRC).
- As with any contractor, get references to assess the contractor's experience, past work success and if other clients liked their work.

**More Information at [www.HealthVermont.gov/Mold](http://www.HealthVermont.gov/Mold)**