



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Health Department Offers Help for Mold Cleanup

For immediate release: September 16, 2011

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BURLINGTON – Mold can be a special problem for homeowners who are cleaning up after flooding, water damage or simply extended rainy or wet conditions.

Mold is a fungi that travels through the air as tiny spores, and can grow and spread quickly under wet conditions. Mold is an allergen that irritates the eyes, nose and throat and can cause serious reactions and respiratory problems for people with allergies or chronic conditions such as asthma.

“If it looks like mold, or smells earthy or musty like mold, you can assume it’s mold” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. “There’s no need to test. The presence of mold or water damage is reason enough to take action to keep mold from spreading. It’s best to get rid of anything that can’t be cleaned effectively.”

The Health Department offers detailed information about mold cleanup on its website at www.healthvermont.gov, and recommends wearing protective eyewear, rubber gloves and an N95 respirator (available at most hardware stores) to filter out airborne particles like mold spores that can cause health problems. N95 respirators are available at no cost from Health Department district offices around the state.

“As always, keep children and pets away from flood-damaged areas while cleanup work is underway, and wash hands often and well to keep germs from spreading,” said Dr. Chen.

General mold cleanup guidelines –

- Dry any and all wet materials as soon as possible.
- Remove and dispose of mold-contaminated materials that can’t be cleaned – especially porous materials that may have absorbed moisture: wallboard, insulation, plaster, carpet/carpet pad, ceiling tiles, wood and paper products.
- Anything that is clean and dry, and does not smell musty or earthy or appear to have water damage can be salvaged.
- Carefully inspect anything that is porous: e.g. fabric, padded furniture, books and papers. These items may have been affected with mold or mildew from high humidity even if they were not in direct contact with flood waters.
- Fabric may be washed with detergent and hot water. If washing removes the sight and smell of mold, the fabric item is safe to keep.
- Non-porous items made of wood, steel, plastic, ceramic, glass or concrete can be cleaned with detergent and water, or a weak bleach solution of no more than 1 cup bleach to 1 gallon water.
- If other special cleaning products are used during the cleanup, carefully read and follow directions. Never mix bleach with ammonia or any other household cleaner.
- Make sure you have good ventilation during cleanup.
- If you see large amounts of mold growth on porous surfaces, consider hiring a professional to remove the material.
- If you develop chest pain, shortness of breath or other respiratory symptoms, seek immediate medical attention.

For more information on health and safety concerns – including detailed instructions for cleaning homes, yards and properties, disinfecting and testing drinking water, and food safety – go to the Health Department’s website at www.healthvermont.gov and select “**After the Flood.**”

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