

ERIE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH
503 KENSINGTON AVE
BUFFALO NY 14214
(716) 961-6800
WWW.ERIE.GOV/
HEALTH

Mold & Moisture

A GUIDE TO MOLD, MOISTURE AND YOUR HOME

MOLD BASICS

- The key to mold control is moisture control.
- If mold is a problem in your home, you should clean up the mold promptly and fix the water problem.
- It is important to dry water-damaged area and items within 24-48 hours to prevent mold growth.

DID YOU KNOW...

Mold can grow outdoors or indoors and comes in many colors including brown, green, black, and yellow.

Mold can gradually destroy things they grow on. You can prevent damage to your home and furnishing, save money, and health problems by controlling the moisture and eliminating mold growth.

What is mold and where is it found?

Mold (fungi) is present everywhere indoors and outdoors. At least 100,000 species of mold are common in the U.S.. Mold is most likely to grow where there is water or dampness, like in a bathroom or basement.

Molds are part of the natural environment. Outdoors, molds play a part in nature by breaking down fallen leaves & dead wood, but indoors mold growth should be avoided. Molds reproduce by means of tiny spores; the spores are invisible to the naked eye and float through the air. Mold may begin growing indoors when mold spores land on surfaces that are wet.

All mold needs moisture to grow. Mold can grow almost anywhere there is water damage, high humidity or dampness and thrives on organic materials like cotton, wool, paper, leather, wood or surfaces with small amounts of organic matter such as food, grease, and soil. Molds can continue to grow eventually eating away the organic medium that is their food source.

When water leaks or spills occur indoors - ACT QUICKLY. If wet or damp materials or areas are dried 24-48 hours after a leak or spill happens, in most cases mold will not grow.



Mold damages what it grows on. The longer it grows, the more damage it can cause.

Can mold cause health problems?

Most types of mold that are routinely encountered are not hazardous to healthy individuals. Molds are usually not a problem indoors, unless mold spores land on a wet or damp spot and begin growing. Molds can produce allergens, irritants and in some cases toxins. Allergic reactions to

mold are common and can include sneezing, runny nose, red eyes, and skin rash (dermatitis). Symptoms other than allergic or irritant types are not commonly reported as a result of inhaling mold. Depending on the amount of exposure and the person's vulnerability more serious

health effects such as fever and breathing problems can occur but are rare. Research on mold and health effects is ongoing. For more information on health effects consult a health professional.

Can the Erie County Dept. of Health inspect my home for mold?

No. Unfortunately, due to the lack of regulations specific to mold at the federal, state, and local level, the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) is unable to perform mold testing or assessment. For additional information on testing, proper cleanup techniques, and mold & moisture prevention, please visit our web site at www.erie.gov/health

How do I get rid of mold?



Removing the source of moisture is critical to preventing mold growth.

It is impossible to get rid of all mold spores indoors; some mold spores will be found floating through the air and in house dust. The mold spore will not grow if moisture is not present. Indoor mold growth can and should be prevented or controlled by controlling moisture indoors. If there is mold growth in your home, you must clean up the mold and fix the water problem. If you clean up the mold but don't fix the water problem, the mold will most likely grow back. Remember that moisture control is the key to mold control.

BATHROOM TIP Places that are often or always damp can be hard to maintain completely free of mold. If mold seems to reappear after clean up, increasing the ventilation (running a fan or opening a window) and cleaning more frequently will usually prevent the mold from recurring, or keep the mold to a minimum.



Never mix ammonia and bleach together as this can release toxic fumes.

Mold Cleanup

Who should do the cleanup depends on a number of factors. One consideration is size of the mold problem. If the moldy area is less than 3'x3' area, in most cases, you can handle the job yourself. **ACT QUICKLY** if you already have a mold problem. Mold can cause staining and cosmetic damage. **TIPS**

- ◆ Scrub mold off non-porous, hard surfaces with detergent & water, and let dry completely.

Bleach, a biocide which can kill living organisms, is not recommended as routine practice for mold clean up. If you choose to use bleach, limit use to 1 part bleach to 10 parts of water.

- ◆ Absorbent or porous materials, such as ceiling tiles and carpet, may have to be thrown away if they become moldy. Mold can grow on or fill in empty crevices making it impossible to remove completely.
- ◆ Seal and discard all debris in heavy duty plastic bags to avoid spreading any mold spores.
- ◆ Avoid exposing yourself or others to mold. Use protective clothing such as long sleeve shirts and pants, N-95 dust mask or respirator, long gloves, and goggles.
- ◆ If you are unsure about how to clean an item you may wish to consult a professional.

Should I hire a professional?



New York State (NYS) guideline for mold remediation states that if the total mold affected area is more than 10 sq. feet, or if you have sensitivity towards

mold, consider hiring a licensed professional. Since January 2015, NYS required that assessors and contractors in the mold remediation industry and their workers are properly trained and licensed. The law is enforced by the NYS Dept. of Labor ensure that proper remediation of mold including licensing of assessors, contractors and

workers, and requirement of a written mold remediation plan. A list of certified contractors can be found on the NYS Dept. of Labor website at: www.labor.ny.gov/workersprotection/safetyhealth/mold/licensing. ECDOH can provide more information on the law and a list of local contractors.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Erie County Department of Health
(716) 961-6800
www.erie.gov/health/mold
NYS Department of La-



bor
www.labor.ny.gov/workersprotection/safetyhealth/mold/licensing

Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/mold

Disclaimer: The Erie County Department of Health does not provide medical advice. The information provided herein is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with questions you may have regarding a medical condition or issue.