



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.

Assume there is mold in your home or building if it has been flooded and it has not been dried out within 24 to 48 hours.

Testing for Mold

Testing for mold is not necessary or recommended. This is 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 to fix the problem are the same: remove the moldy items, dry out the space, and fix the source of water intrusion.

Protecting Yourself from Mold

- Wear protective clothing, such as pants and long sleeves, waterproof work boots, rubber gloves, goggles, and a disposable N95 respirator.
- Do not let children, people with breathing problems and people with weakened immune systems help clean up after a flood.
- Use portable air cleaners with HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters. See the [EPA’s Guide to Air Cleaners in the Home](#).
- 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](#).
- Have your heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) system checked and cleaned by a professional who is experienced in mold clean-up before you turn it on.

Fixing a Mold Problem

To fix a mold problem, remove moldy items and completely dry out your home or building. Mold will come back if your home or building is not completely dry.

Dry your home or building by:

- Opening all doors and windows including interior and attic access to allow air flow.
- Using dehumidifiers and fans (when the electricity is safe) placed at a window or door to blow the air out rather than into your home to avoid spreading mold.

Remove mold by following these steps:

- Clean moldy items that do not absorb water (like glass, plastic, marble, granite, ceramic tile, metal) by using soap and water. Disinfect any surfaces that came in contact with floodwater after cleaning them.
- Throw away and replace materials that easily absorb water (cushions, mattresses, drywall, carpet, insulation, and ceiling tiles). If your child's car seat was exposed to floodwater and cannot be machine washed, throw it away. Never launder car seat harnesses.
- Wash clothes and other fabrics, including clothes worn during the cleanup, in hot water and detergent. Keep them separate from uncontaminated items.
- Vacuum with a HEPA vacuum.

Hiring a Contractor

- There are no federal or Vermont certifications or licenses for mold remediation.
- If mold is covering more than 10 square feet (roughly 3 feet by 3 feet), you may want to hire a contractor that specializes in mold cleanup. A contractor is generally not needed for a small mold problem of less than 10 square feet.
- 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.

Information for Renters and Employees

If you are a renter or employee, talk with your landlord or employer about mold problems. If the problem is serious and conditions persist, renters may want to [file a complaint with the Division of Fire Safety](#), and employees may wish to contact the Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Administration (VOSHA).

Frequently Asked Questions

Should I test for mold if my home or building was flooded?

No, testing for mold is not necessary or recommended. If your home or building has been flooded and you were not able to dry it out within 24 to 48 hours, assume you have mold growth.

Why should I use soap and water?

Soap and water are safe and effective. Using a disinfectant to kill mold is not usually recommended. Dead mold can still cause health effects in some people. Mold ultimately needs to be physically removed. First, wipe surfaces with soap and water to remove mold. Then, vacuum surfaces with a HEPA vacuum.

When should I disinfect surfaces in my home or building?

Using a disinfectant to kill mold is not usually recommended. However, you need to disinfect surfaces that have come in contact with floodwater. You may also need to disinfect porous foundation materials or foundation materials with cracks and crevices (for example, stone, block wall or concrete) to kill mold you cannot remove by cleaning alone. First, clean surfaces with soap and water. Then disinfect them by following the steps in the next question.

If I need to disinfect surfaces, what type of disinfectant should I use?

When possible, choose a disinfectant that uses a safer active ingredient – like hydrogen peroxide, citric acid, ethanol or lactic acid – rather than using bleach. Make sure to follow all the instructions on the product label and wear protective clothing, including disposable N-95 masks, gloves and goggles. [Find out more about safer disinfectants.](#)

How can I prevent future mold growth if my basement is often wet?

Preventing water and moisture problems in your home or building is the key to preventing future mold growth. In humid basements, running a dehumidifier set between 40 and 60% relative humidity can help. Basements that are very damp or wet may need a water or drainage system installed or changes may need to be made outside to direct water away from the home or building's foundation. Talk to a professional to discuss the best system for your home or building.

More Information at www.HealthVermont.gov/Flood

Scan this code with your phone or go to www.HealthVermont.gov/mold to access the links in this document.

