



- Why is mould growing in my home?
- How do I get rid of mould?
- Moisture and mould prevention tips
- Reducing humidity
- Preventing condensation
- Mould myths and facts
- Medical problems

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Why is mould growing in my home?

Moulds are part of the natural environment.

Outdoors, moulds play a part in nature by breaking down dead organic matter such as fallen leaves and dead trees, but indoors, mould growth should be avoided.

Moulds reproduce by means of tiny spores; the spores are invisible to the naked eye and float through outdoor and indoor air.

Mould may begin growing indoors when mould spores land on surfaces that are wet. There are many types of mould, and none of them will grow without water or moisture.

Mould spores are constantly brought into your home, but even when they are, they need conditions to be right before they'll germinate and start mould growth.

You can **prevent mould growth** in your home by making sure it doesn't have the conditions it needs. This is a much healthier and less expensive option than removing mould that's already had a chance to grow.

How do I get rid of mould?

It is impossible to get rid of all mould and mould spores indoors. Some mould spores will be found floating through the air and in house dust.

However, the mould spores will not grow if moisture is not present.

Indoor mould growth can and should be prevented or controlled by controlling moisture indoors.

If there is mould growth in your home, you must clean up the mould and the water problem must be fixed. If you clean up the mould, but not the water problem, then, most likely, the mould probably will come back.

Moisture and mould prevention and control tips

- 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 mould will not grow.
- Clean and repair roof gutters regularly.
- Make sure the ground slopes away from the building foundation, so that water does not enter or collect around the foundation.
- Keep air conditioning drip pans clean and the drain lines unobstructed and flowing properly.
- Keep indoor humidity low. If possible, keep indoor humidity below 60 percent relative humidity. Relative humidity can be measured with a moisture or humidity meter, a small, instrument available at many hardware stores.
- If you see condensation or moisture collecting on windows, walls or pipes act quickly to dry the wet surface and reduce the moisture/water source. Condensation can be a sign of high humidity.

Reducing humidity

- Provide vents to the outside for appliances that produce moisture, such as clothes dryers, stoves, and kerosene heaters to the outside where possible. (Combustion appliances such as stoves and kerosene heaters produce water vapour and will increase the humidity unless vented to the outside.)
- Use air conditioners and/or de-humidifiers when needed.
- Run the bathroom fan or open the window when showering. Use exhaust fans or open windows whenever cooking, running the dishwasher or dishwashing, etc.

Preventing condensation

- Reduce the humidity.
- Increase ventilation or air movement by opening doors and/or windows, when practical. Use fans as needed.
- Cover cold surfaces, such as cold water pipes, with insulation.
- Increase air temperature.

Mould myths and facts

Myth #1: There is only one type of black mould, and it's very bad.

Incorrect. Actually, there are a lot of moulds that look black. The type of black mould that made the news years ago, associated with a lot of ill health effects, was called *Stachybotrys* (pronounced 'stack-ee-bot-riss'). However, there many other moulds that look black, and are fairly common and generally not of concern.

Myth #2: Only black moulds are bad. Other types shouldn't be worried about.

Fact: A lot of people aren't even aware that mould can be white, or orange, or blue.. The colour of a mould generally has to do with the spores it produces, and has no bearing on whether it is dangerous or not. There are some white moulds that grow on walls and other surfaces that can be just as bad as some harmful black moulds.

Myth #3: If I see mould, I should just scrub it with bleach to get rid of it.

This is a complicated myth and there are a couple of different parts to it.

Bleach: Bleach is generally *not* recommended as a fungicide (mould killer).

It works by dousing the mould in toxic levels of a chemical. The problem is twofold: not only are humans just as susceptible to bleach's damaging properties, but the bleach is generally a water-based solution.

In the long run, this often means that water penetrates the surface, giving moisture to the roots of the mould, which happily begins to grow again. In the case of small patches of mould, ordinary household detergent will suffice.

It is important to make sure that the area dries quickly (ideally within 24-48 hours) so that any small bits (too small to see with the naked eye) of mould left over don't get the chance to start growing again.

Mould is able to grow because it has a moisture source. Often this means that there is or was a leak or something similar involved in the first place. Just removing the mould without fixing the water problem will usually result in the mould coming back.

Also, mould can grow behind walls as well as on them, so it is important to determine whether you've only dealt with a portion of the mould, or the whole thing.

Myth #4: I can just paint over the mould to seal it up.

Fact: Actually, mould can eat the paint. Many people attempt to paint over mould only to discover that in a few months the mould has either poked its way through the paint, or the paint has started peeling off. The mould really has to be removed before painting can be done, even if you're using "mould-resistant" paint.

Myth #5: Mould and mildew are totally different things.

Fact: Mildew is mould. It's a word that is used generally to refer to a few specific types of moulds, but it's still all mould.

Medical problems

If you or someone in your family is experiencing symptoms that may be mould-related, your doctor may perform a simple allergy scratch test to let you know for sure if you are sensitive to mould.