



Flood Recovery:

Mold

What is the risk?

Mold spores are a natural part of the environment and may begin growing indoors on wet materials after a flood. There are many types of mold, but none of them will grow without water or moisture. Some types of mold can make you sick, and the health impacts of mold can vary from person to person. Potential health effects of mold include:

- Allergic reactions in sensitive individuals.
- Asthma attacks in people with asthma who are allergic to mold.
- Irritation of the eyes, skin, nose, throat, and lungs.
- Lung infections

If you suspect mold exposure is making you sick, consult your health care provider.

How do I clean up mold after a flood?

Not all homes will have mold after the flood. If you have visible mold, there will likely be more. Once you determine that your home is safe to re-enter, determine that there are no water leaks or floodwaters entering the home. Otherwise mold will grow again. Follow these tips when cleaning up mold:

- Remove wet materials. In general, materials that are wet and cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried within 24-48 hours should be discarded, as they can remain a source of mold growth.
- Dry out your home. Ventilate the area, use heaters and/or fans in a safe manner to quickly dry out wet portions of the home.
- Scrub mold off hard surfaces with soap and water, and dry completely. Using cleaning chemicals, like bleach, is not recommended. If something is moldy and can't be cleaned and dried, throw it away.
- If you have large areas of visible mold (more than 10 square feet) we recommended that you seek professional clean-up help.
- Wear a respirator. Avoid breathing in mold or mold spores. To limit your exposure to airborne mold, you may want to wear an N-95 or P-100 respirator. In order to be effective, the respirator or mask must fit properly, so carefully follow the instructions supplied with the respirator.
- Wear gloves. Long gloves that extend to the middle of the forearm are recommended.

- Wear goggles to avoid getting mold or mold spores in your eyes.
- **Be careful** if you are using a generator to run heaters or fans to dry your home quickly. The exhaust from a portable generator could kill you in minutes if you breathe it in. Only use portable generators **outside** and keep them away from building openings.

I think there might be mold in areas I can't see. What do I do?

Mold may be hidden in places such as the back side of dry wall, wallpaper, or paneling, the top side of ceiling tiles, the underside of carpets and pads, etc. Investigating hidden mold problems may be difficult and may bring you in close contact with mold or mold spores. If you believe that you may have a hidden mold problem, consider hiring an experienced professional.

How can I prevent mold growth?

The best way to control the growth of indoor mold is to eliminate, prevent, and control moisture.

- Dry water-damaged areas and items within 24-48 hours of getting wet to prevent mold growth.
- Keep indoor humidity low. If possible, keep indoor humidity below 60 percent and vent moisture-producing appliances and bathrooms, fix plumbing and roof leaks, etc.
- Do not run the HVAC system if you know or suspect that it is contaminated with mold - it could spread mold throughout the building.

Resources

For more info on drying out a home and other detailed instructions, see the FEMA/Red Cross publication "Repairing Your Flooded Home", at www.redcross.org. The above info was compiled from EPA, FEMA, and American Lung Association.