

An official website of the United States government.

We've made some changes to EPA.gov. If the information you are looking for is not here, you may be able to find it on the EPA Web Archive or the January 19, 2017 Web Snapshot.

[Close](#)



## Mold Cleanup in Your Home

[Información disponible en español](#)

### A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture and Your Home

Read the entire booklet:

- [HTML Version](#)
- [PDF Version](#)

- [Mold Cleanup](#)
- [Tips and Techniques](#)
- [Floods and Flooding](#)

## Mold Cleanup

If you already have a mold problem - **ACT QUICKLY**. Mold damages what it grows on. The longer it grows, the more damage it can cause.



Leaky window - mold is beginning to rot the wooden frame and windowsill.

Who should do the cleanup depends on a number of factors. One consideration is the size of the mold problem. If the moldy area is less than about 10 square feet (less than roughly a 3 ft. by 3 ft. patch), in most cases, you can handle the job yourself, follow the [Mold Cleanup Tips and Techniques](#). However:

- If there has been a lot of water damage, and/or mold growth covers more than 10 square feet, consult EPA guide [Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings](#). Although focused on schools and commercial buildings, this document is applicable to other building types.
- If you choose to hire a contractor (or other professional service provider) to do the cleanup, make sure the contractor has experience cleaning up mold. Check references and ask the contractor to follow the recommendations in EPA guide [Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings](#), the guidelines of the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH), or other guidelines from professional or government organizations.
- If you suspect that the heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) system may be contaminated with mold (it is part of an identified moisture problem, for instance, or there is mold near the intake to the system), consult EPA guide [Should You Have the Air Ducts in Your Home Cleaned?](#) before taking further action. Do not run the HVAC system if you know or suspect that it is contaminated with mold - it could spread mold throughout the building.
- If the water and/or mold damage was caused by sewage or other contaminated water, then call in a professional who has experience cleaning and fixing buildings damaged by contaminated water.
- If you have health concerns, consult a health professional before starting cleanup.\*

## Tips and Techniques

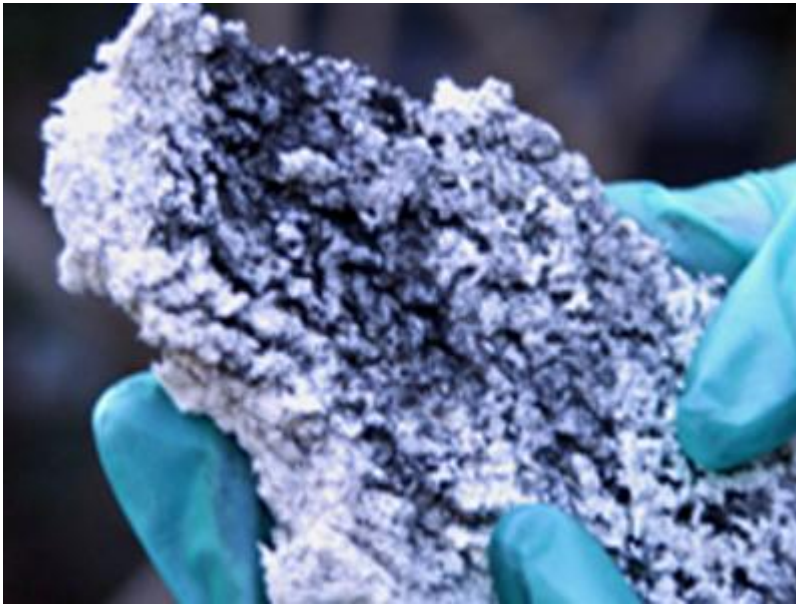


The tips and techniques presented in this section will help you clean up your mold problem. Professional cleaners or remediators may use methods not covered in

this publication. Please note that mold may cause staining and cosmetic damage. It may not be possible to clean an item so that its original appearance is restored.



Mold growing on the underside of a plastic lawn chair in an area where rainwater drips through and deposits organic material.



Mold growing on a piece of ceiling tile.

- **Fix plumbing leaks and other water problems as soon as possible. Dry all items completely.**
- **Scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water, and dry completely.**
- 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 the empty spaces and crevices of porous materials, so the mold may be difficult or impossible to remove completely.
- Avoid exposing yourself or others to mold. See discussions:
  - [What to Wear When Cleaning Moldy Areas](#)
  - [Hidden Mold](#)

- Do not paint or caulk moldy surfaces. Clean up the mold and dry the surfaces before painting. Paint applied over moldy surfaces is likely to peel.
- If you are unsure about how to clean an item, or if the item is expensive or of sentimental value, you may wish to consult a specialist. Specialists in furniture repair, restoration, painting, art restoration and conservation, carpet and rug cleaning, water damage, and fire or water restoration are commonly listed in phone books. Be sure to ask for and check references. Look for specialists who are affiliated with professional organizations.\*

### Bathroom Tip

Places that are often or always damp can be hard to maintain completely free of mold. If there's some mold in the shower or elsewhere in the bathroom that seems to reappear, **increasing ventilation** (running a fan or opening a window) and **cleaning more frequently** will usually prevent mold from recurring, or at least keep the mold to a minimum.



## Floods and Flooding

During a flood cleanup, the indoor air quality in your home or office may appear to be the least of your problems. However, failure to remove contaminated materials and to reduce moisture and humidity can present serious long-term health risks. Standing water and wet materials are a breeding ground for microorganisms, such as viruses, bacteria, and mold. They can cause disease, trigger allergic reactions, and continue to damage materials long after the flood.

To learn more about flood clean up and indoor air quality, visit: [Flood Cleanup and Effects on Indoor Air Quality](#).

LAST UPDATED ON OCTOBER 24, 2018