

Fact Sheet

Controlling mould after a flood

Mould is a type of fungi which belongs to a group of organisms including mushrooms and yeasts.

For mould spores to grow and reproduce, a food source (dust, dirt or organic matter) and moisture is required.

Mould can be black, grey, green or white. Mould often looks like a stain or smudge and may smell musty.

Health effects of mould

Mould can potentially cause nasal congestion, sneezing, coughing or wheezing, and respiratory infections. It can also worsen asthma and allergic conditions. Contact with mould can irritate eyes and skin.

Some moulds can cause more serious health effects such as fevers and breathing problems in people who are immunocompromised or suffer from respiratory diseases.

If you are concerned about any symptoms you are experiencing, seek medical advice.

Mould growth after flooding

Excess moisture and pooled water caused by a flood can cause mould to grow in your home.

This may be a health risk for you and your family.

When returning to your home after a flood, be aware of any visible mould or a musty smell.

High mould levels are likely if the house has been flooded for more than two days.

Mould should be removed as soon as it appears. Completely eliminating mould and its causes can take some persistence.

Some mould is not visible as it might be in a roof space, behind a wall or under floor coverings.

Controlling mould growth

- > Remove all sources of pooled water and excessive moisture from the home.
- > Remove all wet or flood-damaged items, including wallpaper, plasterboard, carpet, rugs, bedding, mattresses, furniture, stuffed toys, clothing and other materials that cannot be properly dried or cleaned.
- > Remove wet wall lining (plasterboard) to allow for proper drying out of internal wall spaces.
- > Remove all soft or absorbent materials with mould growth.
- > Temporarily store damaged or discarded items outside the home, in a safe, clean, dry place such as a shed or garage, until your insurance claim is processed.
- > Clean and disinfect all surfaces inside the house, including floors, walls, kitchen, bathroom and laundry.
- > Allow the house to dry throughout. Open the doors and windows to air out the house and use fans and dehumidifiers when safe to do so.

Air-conditioning or central heating should not be used if damaged or contaminated by floodwater. If you suspect contamination, do not use until they are cleaned and checked by a qualified person.



Cleaning mould

People with immunocompromise or respiratory disease should not clean up mould.

If you remove mould yourself, make sure there is good ventilation. You should also wear protective clothing, including a P2 face mask, rubber gloves and eye protection.

Small areas of mould can be cleaned by using a bleach mixture (1 part bleach to 3 parts water) or a suitable commercial product (follow the manufacturer's instructions). Take care not to splash the cleaning solution.

Don't dry brush the mouldy area as a brush can flick the mould spores into the air and cause health problems.

If mould returns, there may be an underlying problem.

If mould contamination is extensive, a professional cleaner should be consulted.

Painting

If a mould-affected room is to be painted:

- > Clean the area with a commercially available mould remover and allow to dry thoroughly before repainting.
- > Use a low sheen, semi-gloss or gloss enamel rather than a flat acrylic paint. Mould resistant paint and additives are available from paint stores.

For more information

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