

MOLD CONTROL IN THE HOME



1. Throughout the house:

- Keep humidity low, 35% if possible, but in no case over 50%. Obtain a gauge to measure relative humidity.
- Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier in the summer, with the windows closed. Dehumidifiers must be emptied of water regularly. Air conditioners should be sprayed at the air intake with a mold-killing spray if they develop a musty odor. Special filters can be added to help trap the air-borne allergens. Too powerful an air conditioner will cool before adequately dehumidifying.
- If using a humidifier in the winter, avoid over-humidification. Wash the humidifier and change the water frequently to prevent mold growth in the unit, occasionally cleaning the interior with a dilute bleach solution. Central humidifiers are common sources of mold growth, and must be checked and cleaned frequently.
- Very tightly insulated houses prevent the escape of moisture and thus encourage mold growth. Allow adequate ventilation.

2. In the kitchen:

- Use an exhaust fan to remove water vapor when cooking.
- Mold can grow in refrigerators, particularly around the door gaskets. Empty water pans below self-defrosting refrigerators frequently. Be careful with stored foods, removing spoiling foods immediately.
- Molds grow in garbage containers, which should be emptied frequently and kept clean.

3. In the bathroom:

- Use an exhaust fan or window to remove humidity after showering.
- Wash shower curtain, bathroom tiles, shower stall or tub, toilet tank and ceiling with mold-killing and mold-preventing solutions (see below). Repair any damaged caulking or grout. Replace shower curtain when mold growth is noted.
- Do not carpet bathroom.

4. In the laundry room:

- Vent the clothes dryer to the outdoors. Dry clothing immediately after washing.

5. In the basement:

- Use a dehumidifier. Correct seepage or flooding problems, and remove any previously flooded carpet. If a dirt floor is present, cover with a plastic vapor barrier.
- Keep the basement free of dust, and remove moldy stored items. Avoid storage of any unnecessary items likely to harbor molds. Use a paint with a mold inhibitor, especially on brick or cinderblock walls.
- Allergic individuals should avoid living in basement apartments or dormitories.

6. In the bedroom:

- Follow steps to decrease dust exposure. Ideally, carpeting should be removed

and mattresses encased in impermeable zippered covers. Foam rubber pillows and mattresses are particularly likely to become moldy.

- Window condensation can lead to moisture and mold growth on the window frame. Books, leather products, stuffed toys, wood paneling and wallpaper paste also support mold growth, and should be avoided if possible, or cleaned with appropriate mold-killing solutions (see below).
- Mold grows well in closets, which are damp and dark. Dry shoes and boots thoroughly before storing. A low watt light bulb, or a chemical moisture remover, can prevent mold growth in closets.
- Although indoor plants are not a major source of indoor mold spores, it is prudent to limit the number of houseplants. Spores can become airborne when plants are watered, repotted, or otherwise disturbed, and plants increase the indoor humidity. Mold is present on the bark of wood. If using a fireplace or woodburning stove, do not store firewood inside. Live Christmas trees are best avoided.
- Good quality HEPA air cleaners can remove mold spores from the air. Inexpensive table top air cleaners are not effective.
- Units which heat airborne mold spores can help reduce the spread of mildew.

7. Out of doors:

- Avoid cutting grass and raking leaves, or use a face mask if these chores must be done by the allergic individual. Avoid exposure to soil, compost piles, sandboxes, hay, fertilizers and barns. Prune or cut trees to avoid shading of the home. Eliminate vines.
- Correct drainage problems near the house, as pooled water greatly increases mold formation.
- Avoid camping or walking in the woods, where mold growth on rotted logs and other vegetation is high. Some mold spores are spread on dry and windy days, others at times of rainfall. Limit outdoor exposure at these times.

8. Work and miscellaneous environments:

- Greenhouses, antique shops, saunas, sleeping bags, summer cottages and hotel rooms are sources of increased mold exposure. Automobile air conditioners may harbor mold.
- Occupational exposure to mold occurs in farmers, gardeners, bakers, brewers, florists, carpenters, mill workers, upholsterers and paper hangers. Your allergist can offer specific recommendations.

9. Products to kill molds:

- A solution of equal parts of household bleach and water will kill mold. Commercially available products such as X-14® contain a similar solution combined with cleaning agents in a spray dispenser.
- Mold growth can be prevented by products such as Mildew Stop® Spray.