

# Fact Sheet: Mold

For Transient Accommodations and Temporary Worker Housing

## What You Should Know

**Mold and mildew** are fungi that grow indoors if they have water and a source of food, such as drywall or dust.

**All mold growing indoors is a health concern.** Living in damp or moldy spaces can lead to health problems. People with long-term health conditions are more likely to be affected.

**Stop using affected areas until they are properly cleaned.** This is to protect guests and occupants.

**How to clean up and prevent mold:** Indoor mold growth is a moisture problem. Fix the leak or moisture build-up and remove the mold. Avoid bleach or other chemical treatments. **Never paint or re-caulk over mold.**

## Locate, Prepare, Repair, and Clean

### 1. Locate the Moisture Problem

Carefully look around. Look for stains, soft materials, and rust. Take photos to document. You may find mold where:

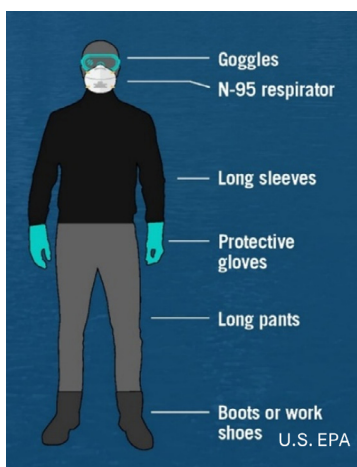
- Water builds up from low ventilation
- Leaks occur
- Condensation collects
- Drains are blocked
- Flooding occurs



**Testing:** Since you can see or smell mold, you usually don't need to test for it. There is no healthy level of mold. DOH inspectors may cite for "mold-like growth", but we do not test for mold.

**Black mold:** It does not matter what color it is. Remove all indoor mold.

**Is it mold?** It may be hard to tell. Look for the underlying moisture problem or compare your space with photos of mold. Find images in the [Northwest Clean Air Agency's Mold Guidance for Tenants and Landlords](#) (in English and Spanish) and [U.S. EPA's Mold Image Library](#).



### 2. Prepare

**You can choose to do repairs on your own, but consider hiring a professional if:**

- There is more than 3 by 3 square feet of damage
- The mold affects the building structure
- There is a sewage leak
- There is hidden mold
- Required by insurance or legal advice

Ask mold professionals to look for visible mold and dampness instead of mold type or spore count. In Washington state, anyone can call themselves a "mold specialist". Look for a professional who follows a standard from a recognized organization. See [Hiring an Indoor Air Investigator or Contractor](#).

**If you choose to clean mold or do repairs on your own, use personal protective equipment (PPE).** This includes wearing:

- Goggles that completely cover the eyes
- A securely fitted filtering respirator like an N95\*
- Long sleeves
- Long pants
- Nitrile or rubber gloves
- Work boots

After leaving the work area, remove and bag disposable PPE. Tie off the top and put the bag in the trash. Wash reusable PPE like boots and goggles with soap and water. Launder contaminated clothing.

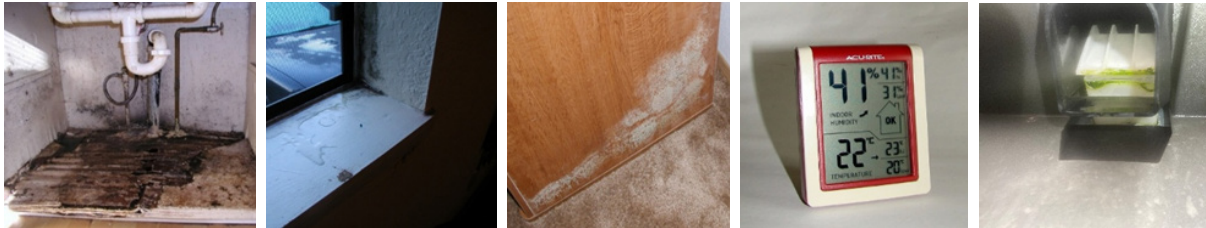
\*Employees can voluntarily use N95 masks when the employer determines there is no respiratory hazard. The employee and employer need to acknowledge [Washington State Department of Labor & Industry's voluntary use advisory information](#). For more extensive or frequent mold work, see if you need a respirator program.

**Seal the area** before you repair or clean. See the [EPA's Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings](#).

**Be aware of hazards** such as [asbestos](#) and [lead paint](#). Follow safety requirements to prevent exposure.

### 3. Repair and Prevent

To control indoor mold, repair water problems. Act fast! Mold damages buildings as it grows. Address the problem before a guest or occupant complains.



- **Keep surfaces clean and dry.** Mold may start to grow in 24 to 48 hours. Install easily cleanable surfaces, especially in kitchens and bathrooms. Prevent and quickly wipe up condensation.
- **Repair leaks quickly.**
- **Replace damaged surfaces.** See the [U.S. EPA's Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings](#).
- **Reduce indoor humidity.** Open windows or use heating and ventilation systems. A hygrometer, shown in the 4th picture below, is a low-cost way to help keep indoor humidity between 40% and 60%.
- **Install, maintain, and use exhaust fans** in kitchens, bathrooms, and laundry rooms. Regularly check that fans work. Put a tissue up to the fan vent. If the tissue stays without your help, the exhaust fan is working.
- **Clean ice machine chutes and drains.** Follow the manufacturer's instructions. Clean more frequently if needed.

### 4. Clean Affected Areas

**Small areas of surface mold:** Scrub with mild detergent, like laundry detergent, and warm water. Dry completely. Continue to monitor. See our [Mold webpage](#). **Consider hiring a professional** for larger areas of damage.

**Bleach and other mold treatments** are harmful, unnecessary, and not effective at removing mold. If you choose to use chemicals, follow all safety instructions on the label. Follow pesticide application requirements for biocides and worker safety requirements. Never mix cleaners. See our [Pesticides webpage](#).



## More Information



Mold, DOH: [doh.wa.gov/mold](https://doh.wa.gov/mold)

Mold Information and Voicemail Line, DOH: 360-236-3090

Photo credits: Northwest Clean Air Agency, U.S. EPA