

Mould

Mould, sometimes spelled mold, is a fungus that grows on or in damp and decaying vegetable matter. A fungus is a microorganism that dissolves nutrients from the materials it lives in and on, damaging those host materials. Mildew is a popular but incorrect name for moulds that produce a whitish growth on damp materials.

Our indoor and outdoor air has a certain level of mould spores floating in the air. When these spores find a moist medium and a temperature between 5 and 38 degrees Celsius they germinate, producing millions of spores (which attack our immune system if in large numbers) in 5 to 16 days. As this mould grows and reproduces it produces poisonous toxins (musty smell) as part of its competition strategy. Spores can lie dormant for a long time.

Moulds can occur in different colours depending on the host. Moulds are not always easy to recognize, they often look like a simple stain, smudge or discoloration. A simple test is dab suspect marks with a drop of chlorine bleach. If the colour changes or disappears, the stain is likely organic and probably a mould.

High air moisture levels help moulds to grow. Places where moisture can condensate is an ideal place for mould to grow. Moulds are found indoors as well as outdoors. Moulds spread by releasing tiny seed-like particles called spores into the air. Many moulds need some degree of warmth to grow. Moulds are often found in showers, on older metal window frames, on wood that is moist and doesn't completely dry, as well as under wet carpet and other flooring materials.

Moulds can be seen as well as smelt. Moulds may give off a "mouldy" or "musty" smell, an "earthy" smell, or smell faintly like alcohol.

Moulds can activate allergies and respiratory disease, and the toxins they produce can wear down the immune system—leaving people, especially children, vulnerable to many illnesses. No one should live in a mouldy environment.

Mould can be removed with a warm water and cleansing soap mixture. After mould patches have been removed, wash down the entire area, rinse thoroughly with warm water and dry quickly.

Mould in an attic is not good but the mould spores can be contained in the attic.

It may be necessary to remove the drywall, wood or other material that the mould has attached itself to. If the mould keeps reappearing or becomes darker, the materials need to be removed carefully to contain the spores. The mould may be dormant for a period of time but under ideal conditions of moisture and warmth will become active again.

Necessary measures to prevent mould include the following:

1. Find and eliminate the source of excessive moisture (water).
2. Keep surfaces cleaner than normal.
3. Provide continuous, controlled ventilation. Perhaps a fan connected to a dehumidistat set at 55 percent needs to be installed near sources of moisture, i.e. showers.

Expensive testing can be done for the presence of harmful moulds, through air sampling. There are recommended procedures and accredited companies which do this type of work.

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