



What You Can Do to Control Mold

Mold. The very word is enough to make a person worry.

Mold can be good — it is an essential part of the process in making some cheeses and penicillin, for example, and necessary for the decomposition of organic matter in nature. However, some types of mold are very dangerous, especially when it grows undetected in your home.

Mold spores spread easily and cannot be completely destroyed. Mold can grow anywhere; on carpet, clothing, food, paper, and in places you can't see, such as the backside of drywall, areas inside walls around leaking or condensing pipes, and above ceiling tiles. Mold problems are difficult and costly to fix, and also create allergens and irritants (and, rarely, toxins) that may compromise your health.

So what can you do if you are concerned about mold growing in your home?

The best approach is preventing mold before it becomes a problem. The key to mold prevention is simple: **moisture control**.

You cannot mold-proof your home, but you can make it mold-resistant. Below are some approaches to take to limit moisture indoors, and the mold that thrives on it.

1. **Identify and fix the problem areas.** Perform an audit of your home to determine where there are problem (moist) areas. Are windows leaking or left open? Do you notice frequent condensation on a window? Is there a water stain on the ceiling from a persistent leak? Preventing mold from growing or spreading might be as simple as keeping the temperature in your apartment between 72-78 degrees.
2. **Dry wet areas immediately.** Mold can't grow without moisture, so tackle wet areas right away. Rain water from open windows can spill onto carpets and should be dried immediately. Everyday occurrences need attention too. Don't leave wet items lying around, and be sure to dry the floor and walls after a shower. Don't leave wet clothes in the washing machine; mold can spread quickly in these conditions. Use your dryer and don't hang wet clothes inside your home.

3. **Prevent moisture with proper ventilation.** Routine domestic activities can be fostering the growth of mold in your home. You can ensure that a simple activity such as cooking dinner, taking a shower, or doing a load of laundry doesn't invite



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mold. Prevent mold from occurring by ensuring there is proper ventilation in your bathroom, kitchen, laundry room, and any other high-moisture areas. Appliances that produce moisture such as clothes dryers and stoves should be vented to the outside. Use air conditioning units and dehumidifiers, especially in humid climates. Always turn on your bathroom fan when taking a bath or shower to help expel the moisture.

4. **Monitor humidity indoors.** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends keeping indoor humidity between 30 and 60 percent. You can measure humidity with a moisture meter purchased from your local hardware store. You can detect high humidity by simply looking for potential problem areas. Signs of excessive humidity include condensation on windows, pipes, and walls. If you notice condensation, dry the surface immediately and address the source of moisture (for example, turn off a humidifier if water appears on the inside of nearby windows).
5. **Live plants are a haven for mold.** The soil in flower pots never completely dries and with moisture there comes mold. Minimize the number of live plants you keep in your home. Do not over water and take them outside often so the soil will dry completely before re-watering them. Over-watering plants can cause the flower pots to leak inside your home and contribute to mold growth.
6. **Improve the air flow in your home.** According to the EPA, as temperatures drop, the air is able to hold less moisture. Without good air flow in your home, that excess moisture may appear on your walls, windows and floors. To increase circulation, open doors between rooms, move furniture away from walls and open doors to closets that may be colder than the living spaces. Let fresh air in to reduce moisture and keep mold at bay. However, be careful not to open windows on hot and humid days. The air conditioning system is designed to control humidity throughout the facility by keeping the temperature constant and adding fresh air. When residents open their windows, it allows humidity inside the building and causes the main air conditioner to become unbalanced and unable to function properly. When this occurs, moisture is allowed inside the building's structure and mold can grow.

The presence of mold can cause mild to significant health effects, as well as property damage. It is beneficial to educate yourself and your neighbors on these tips and report any water leaks or signs of mold to your property manager.

We take smarter care of your risk so you can take better care of your business.

Reduce your risk. Contact an advisor today.