

CLEANUP



Leaky window – mold is beginning to rot the wooden frame and windowsill.

If you already have a mold problem –
ACT QUICKLY.
Mold damages what it grows on. The longer it grows, the more damage it can cause.

Who should do the cleanup? Who should do the cleanup depends on a number of factors. One consideration is the size of the mold problem. If the moldy area is less than about 10 square feet (less than roughly a 3 ft. by 3 ft. patch), in most cases, you can handle the job yourself, following the guidelines below. However:

- If there has been a lot of water damage, and/or mold growth covers more than 10 square feet, consult the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guide: *Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings*. Although focused on schools and commercial

buildings, this document is applicable to other building types. It is available on the Internet at: www.epa.gov/mold.

- If you choose to hire a contractor (or other professional service provider) to do the cleanup, make sure the contractor has experience cleaning up mold. Check references and ask the contractor to follow the recommendations in EPA's *Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings*, the guidelines of the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH), or other guidelines from professional or government organizations.
- If you suspect that the heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) system may be contaminated with mold (it is part of an identified moisture problem, for instance, or there is mold near the intake to the system), consult EPA's guide *Should You Have the Air Ducts in Your Home Cleaned?* before taking further action. Do not run the HVAC system if you know or suspect that it is contaminated with mold - it could spread mold throughout the building. Visit www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs to download a copy of the EPA guide.
- If the water and/or mold damage was caused by sewage or other contaminated water, then call in a professional who has experience cleaning and fixing buildings damaged by contaminated water.
- If you have health concerns, consult a health professional before starting cleanup.

MOLD CLEANUP GUIDELINES

BATHROOM TIP

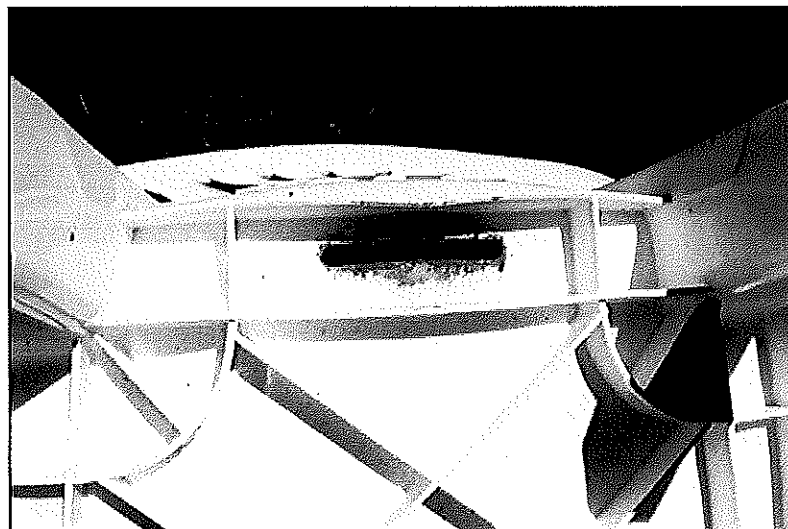
Places that are often or always damp can be hard to maintain completely free of mold. If there's some mold in the shower or elsewhere in the bathroom that seems to reappear, increasing the ventilation (running a fan or opening a window) and cleaning more frequently will usually prevent mold from recurring, or at least keep the mold to a minimum.



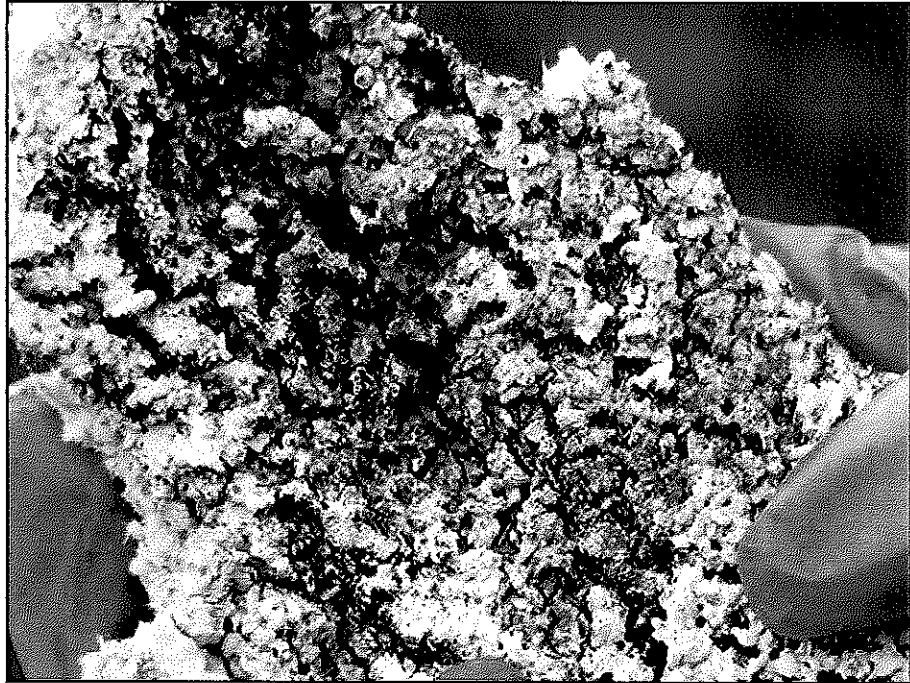
Tips and techniques The tips and techniques presented in this section will help you clean up your mold problem. Professional cleaners or remediators may use methods not covered in this publication. Please note that mold may cause staining and cosmetic damage. It may not be possible to clean an item so that its original appearance is restored.

- Fix plumbing leaks and other water problems as soon as possible. Dry all items completely.
- Scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water, and dry completely.

Mold growing on the underside of a plastic lawnchair in an area where rainwater drips through and deposits organic material.



Mold growing on a piece of ceiling tile.



- Absorbent or porous materials, such as ceiling tiles and carpet, may have to be thrown away if they become moldy. Mold can grow on or fill in the empty spaces and crevices of porous materials, so the mold may be difficult or impossible to remove completely.
- Avoid exposing yourself or others to mold (see discussions: **What to Wear When Cleaning Moldy Areas** and **Hidden Mold**.)
- Do not paint or caulk moldy surfaces. Clean up the mold and dry the surfaces before painting. Paint applied over moldy surfaces is likely to peel.
- If you are unsure about how to clean an item, or if the item is expensive or of sentimental value, you may wish to consult a specialist. Specialists in furniture repair, restoration, painting, art restoration and conservation, carpet and rug cleaning, water damage, and fire or water restoration are commonly listed in phone books. Be sure to ask for and check references. Look for specialists who are affiliated with professional organizations.

WHAT TO WEAR WHEN

CLEANING

MOLDY AREAS



Mold growing on a suitcase stored in a humid basement.

It is important
to take
precautions to
**LIMIT
YOUR
EXPOSURE**
to mold and
mold spores.

- **Avoid breathing in mold or mold spores.** In order to limit your exposure to airborne mold, you may want to wear an N-95 respirator, available at many hardware stores and from companies that advertise on the Internet. (They cost about \$12 to \$25.) Some N-95 respirators resemble a paper dust mask with a nozzle on the front, others are made primarily of plastic or rubber and have removable cartridges that trap most of the mold spores from entering. In order to be effective, the respirator or mask must fit properly, so carefully follow the instructions supplied with the respirator. Please note that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that respirators fit properly (fit testing) when used in an occupational setting; consult OSHA for more information (800-321-OSHA or osha.gov/).

■ **Wear gloves.** Long gloves that extend to the middle of the forearm are recommended. When working with water and a mild detergent, ordinary household rubber gloves may be used. If you are using a disinfectant, a biocide such as chlorine bleach, or a strong cleaning solution, you should select gloves made from natural rubber, neoprene, nitrile, polyurethane, or PVC (see **Cleanup and Biocides**). Avoid touching mold or moldy items with your bare hands.

■ **Wear goggles.** Goggles that do not have ventilation holes are recommended. Avoid getting mold or mold spores in your eyes.



Cleaning while wearing N-95 respirator, gloves, and goggles.

How do I know when the remediation or cleanup is finished? You must have completely fixed the water or moisture problem before the cleanup or remediation can be considered finished.

- You should have completed mold removal. Visible mold and moldy odors should not be present. Please note that mold may cause staining and cosmetic damage.
- You should have revisited the site(s) shortly after cleanup and it should show no signs of water damage or mold growth.
- People should have been able to occupy or re-occupy the area without health complaints or physical symptoms.
- Ultimately, this is a judgment call; there is no easy answer.