

## How Can I Prevent Mold in My House?

Some routine measures will help prevent mold growth in your home. The most effective step is to eliminate the source of water because mold must have water to grow. Mold growth is almost always associated with moisture, water leaks or elevated humidity levels. Here are some things you can do to keep mold from growing:

1. Report water problems or leaks to the Housing Manager. These should be repaired as soon as possible.
2. Keep indoor humidity levels low (30-50% is ideal): vent bathrooms, dryers and other moisture-generating sources to the outside, use air conditioners and dehumidifiers, increase seasonal cross-flow ventilation by opening windows and doors periodically, and use exhaust fans when cooking and dishwashing.
3. Do not install carpet in areas that are likely to be damp, such as bathrooms, garages or foyers.
4. Dry out wet areas as soon as possible - but at least within 48 hours.

5. Clean small amounts of mold on hard surfaces (less than 10 square feet) using a mild detergent and damp sponge or cloth. Wear rubber gloves and scrub the affected area with soapy water until clean. Rinse with clean water. Let the treated area dry naturally overnight.

You may want to consider wearing a N95 respirator to protect against breathing airborne spores while cleaning. Consult your doctor before doing any mold cleanup if you have pre-existing medical conditions that may be exacerbated by mold exposure.

- Do not use ammonia cleaners
- Do not clean up mold if you have been diagnosed with mold allergies or sensitivities
- Do not clean large areas of mold

If the mold comes back after cleaning, either the area is still getting wet or not all of the mold was removed during cleaning. Check again for a leak or other water source and repair as needed.

Repeat the cleaning procedure twice (scrub and wipe dry; scrub and wipe dry again), then allow to dry completely.

## For More Information

### CDC Mold Fact Sheet

<https://www.cdc.gov/mold/faqs.htm>

## FORT BELVOIR On-Post Housing

## What You Should Know About Mold



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## What is Mold?

Mold is a type of fungus found just about everywhere - inside and outside - on plants, mulch and even foods. Molds are beneficial to the environment because they break down dead material. Certain types of mold have proven extremely valuable in the production of antibiotics.

Molds produce spores - very tiny, lightweight reproductive bodies that travel easily through the air.

However, when mold spores are present in large numbers, they may cause symptoms in some people that are similar to allergies caused by plant pollens.



## How Does Mold Grow?

In order to grow, mold needs oxygen, food and water. Oxygen is in air, and almost any organic substance can be a food source, including many things in your house: cellulose material like non-fiberglass insulation, paper products, cardboard, ceiling tiles, wood, carpet, dust, paint, wallpaper, and wallboard. Controlling mold growth starts with controlling moisture. However, even a small amount of moisture that stays in your house may be enough to let mold spores grow. It can come from leaking pipes, roofs or windows, failing to clean up splashing and spills, overflows from the washing machine or dishwasher, humidifiers or failing to provide adequate ventilation.

## How Do I Tell if I Have a Mold Problem in My House?

Look around! The most practical way to find a mold problem is look for mold growth or find the source of suspicious odors. Mold often appears as discoloration, staining or fuzzy growth on the surface of building materials or furnishings. It can look cottony, velvety, granular or leathery, be varied colors of white, gray, brown, black, yellow or green, and can cause an earthy or musty smell. Small areas of mold growth (less than 10 square feet) on hard surfaces can be cleaned by occupants. If you see a large amount (greater than 10 square feet) of what you suspect to be mold, contact your Community Manager immediately.

## Can Mold Affect My Health?

Molds rarely affect healthy people. In fact, we are exposed to molds and spores every day. If mold is growing on a surface, spores may spread into the air where they can be inhaled. Some people who inhale a large number of spores may have health effects. For example, naturally occurring molds in outside air are associated with allergies in some adults and children, often producing hay fever- like reactions that include:

- Respiratory problems like wheezing
- Nasal and sinus congestion
- Eye irritation
- Dry cough
- Nose or throat irritation

Some individuals may be more sensitive to molds, including:

- Infants and children
- Elderly people
- Immune compromised patients, such as people with HIV infection, cancer, liver disease or those receiving chemotherapy
- Individuals with existing respiratory conditions like allergies and asthma

If you think you have a health problem caused by mold in your home, call your personal physician for an appointment. If your doctor diagnoses a specific problem associated with mold, he or she may contact base environmental to evaluate your home or other environment.