



Mold Removal Guidelines Following A Flood

If your home gets damaged by a flood, it's really important to be careful when getting rid of mold. Mold can grow on things that stay wet for more than two or three days. The longer it grows, the more it can be bad for your health and the harder it is to remove. So, as soon as it's safe to go back home, don't wait—clean up and dry out quickly.

Before you start cleaning up, take some pictures for insurance. Don't wait for the insurance person to come before throwing away wet and moldy things. Most regular home insurance doesn't cover mold damage, but flood insurance might help with the costs.

Mold and Health

Mold affects people differently, but being around it too much or for a long time can be unhealthy for anyone. It can cause allergies, asthma attacks, and may make you more likely to get sick. Babies, old people, and those who are already sick are most at risk. Some molds can even make toxins that are harmful. Don't be misled by the term "black mold"—many molds can be black.

Testing for mold is usually not needed for health concerns, but some insurance and legal services may require it. Professionals may test before and after cleaning to make sure it worked. If you hire someone to clean up mold, look for a licensed contractor with special training and tools. Make sure to get the cost, methods, and steps in writing, and compare them with the guidelines.

Do-it-yourself Mold Cleanup Steps

For a safe and effective cleanup, follow these steps and check out guides from the EPA and CDC. You can find them online at www.epa.gov/mold for the EPA's guide and at cdc.gov for the CDC's guide on Mold Prevention Strategies and Possible Health Effects after hurricanes and floods.

1. Wear Protective Gear during Cleanup.

Mostly, people get exposed to mold by breathing in tiny particles called spores and through their skin. To stay safe, wear gloves, goggles, and a special mask called an N-95 respirator or a higher-rated one. Some masks even have valves to make it easier to breathe.

2. Keep the area where you're working on mold separated from the rest of the home, and let fresh air in from outside. Make sure to separate the area where you're cleaning up mold from the rest of the house to avoid spreading spores. Open windows for fresh air, but don't use the central air system. Cover air vents with plastic, and if the upper floor is dry, put plastic on the stairs. If you have power, use a fan in a window to push moldy air outside.

3. Take away things with mold on them. Get rid of porous items/materials that have mold or sewage on them. Put them in plastic bags if you can and throw them away. Cover the moldy stuff with plastic before taking it out to stop mold spores from spreading.

- Get rid of all flooded carpet, upholstery, fabrics and mattresses as soon as possible. It's usually better to throw them away. If you really want to save something valuable, clean, disinfect, and dry it quickly outside your home. Don't use flooded padding again
- Take out all wet insulation, even if the wall looks dry. Wet insulation can stay damp for too long, causing hidden mold and decay inside the walls. Cut the wall covering above the wet level because water can move up beyond the flood level.
- It's best to get rid of all moldy materials, especially if there is a lot of mold that has been there for a long time. This includes things like wood products, ceiling tiles, and paper products.
- You can clean and sanitize plaster, non-paper faced gypsum board walls, and wood paneling, if they dried well, are in good condition, and have no insulation in the wall. Be careful, though, as there might be mold on the backside that could release spores through air leaks in the walls.
- Remove vinyl wallpaper, flooring, and other coverings of wet materials.

4. Clean and Disinfect. You can clean surface mold from things like hard plastic, concrete, glass, metal, and solid wood. It's important to remove the mold, not just kill it, because even dead spores can cause health issues.

After you clean, you can use a disinfectant to kill any leftover mold. If there was sewage contamination, it's really important to use the disinfectant. When using disinfectants, follow the instructions on the label, be careful, and never mix bleach with ammonia or acids. Keep in mind that many disinfectants can kill mold but may not stop it from coming back.

- Get rid of any dirt. Wash out opened spaces in the walls.
- Clean dirty or moldy things with all-purpose

cleaners that don't have phosphates because phosphate can make mold grow. If things are rough, you might need to scrub them. Rinse, but be careful with strong sprays that could push water into things.

- After you clean, use a disinfectant to kill germs on walls and other things. Dirt can make some disinfectants not work well. On things that won't lose their color and aren't metal, you can use a solution of 1/2 - 1 cup bleach in a gallon of water to disinfect. Don't use it in the air conditioning system. Other disinfectant like alcohols, phenolics, and hydrogen peroxide are not as strong but are safer.

5. Think about using a special treatment called Borate. Ask a pest control professional to use a special treatment on wood to stop termites, decay, and mold. Some other treatments, such as fungicides, can also help stop mold from coming back. Don't put sealants on wood.

6. Let fresh air in after cleaning. Use fans by windows to push mold spores outside.

7. Make wet things dry quickly. Close windows and use heaters, fans, or a dehumidifier, which is a machine that takes water out of the air. If there's no power, keep windows open.

8. Keep watching for signs of dampness or new mold. Mold can come back in just 2-3 days if things stay wet. Even if wood looks dry, it might still be wet enough for mold to grow back. If mold comes back, clean again and try to dry things faster.

9. Wait before fixing things. Don't fix things until everything is completely dry. Wood should have less than 20% moisture. Don't use certain materials like vinyl wallpaper, oil-based paint, or other finishes that stop things from drying inside.

For more information, see [Storm Recovery Guide \(Isuagcenter.com\)](http://StormRecoveryGuide(Isuagcenter.com)) or [Cleaning Your Flood Damage Home fact sheet \(Isuagcenter.com\)](http://CleaningYourFloodDamageHomefactsheet(Isuagcenter.com))