

Mold



Five of the most commonly asked questions about household mold, with answers.

1 How do I get rid of excess mold?

- Eliminate excess moisture and keep relative humidity under sixty percent. Molds are types of fungi. All fungi need moisture to live. Eliminate moisture sources or the mold will most likely return.
- Remove mold AFTER moisture sources have been eliminated. You can remove mold from hard, non-porous surfaces by scrubbing surfaces with a soap and water solution. Take care not to introduce too much extra moisture, and be sure to dry surfaces thoroughly. Soft or porous items (such as carpets, fabrics, and other porous materials) may need to be discarded.
- Keep mold from growing by keeping moisture sources in check! Common moisture sources include indoor water leaks, outdoor water leaks, and humid air condensing on cold surfaces.

2 Who can test my home for mold?

- Testing for mold is generally not necessary. A test report will simply give you the name of some molds. The kind of mold growing doesn't matter, because ANY mold growth means that a source of moisture is present. The source of the moisture will not appear on any test report. Don't wait...solve moisture problems and get rid of mold!

3 Where can I find a mold remediation specialist?

- Buyer beware.
- Currently, there are no definitions or standards for mold remediation. Anyone, at any time, may claim to be a mold contractor or mold remediation specialist.
- Because there are no government mold remediation licensing programs in Georgia, you may want to find a contractor who has been certified by a non-profit program. There are several programs available. Read the fine print associated with the program to find out exactly what the contractor has to do to be certified. See if a code of conduct is in place. In short, find someone who knows what they are doing and has demonstrated competency.
- Become familiar with common sense guides and recommendations for getting rid of mold published by several agencies, including the University of Georgia (UGA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). If you decide to contact a contractor after reading these materials, check the contractor's knowledge. If you know more than the contractor, find someone else! If the "mold guy" you interview disagrees with the common sense basics, (e.g. first solve the moisture problem and then remove the mold), find someone else. Also, don't allow the contractor to spray chemicals which might affect your health. Ask to see material safety data sheets (MSDS).
- Use common sense precautions. Ask for references, get all estimates in writing, and always get more than one estimate. Check references to see if other consumers been satisfied with the contractor's work.
- Consider having an inspection prepared by a reputable home inspector. A home inspector may be able to identify structural problems that facilitate mold growth.

4 Is the mold in my home toxic or harmful?

- According to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, mold in damp indoor environments is associated with upper respiratory (nasal and throat) tract symptoms, cough, hypersensitivity pneumonitis in susceptible persons, wheeze, and asthma symptoms in sensitized persons.
- Although the media talks about 'toxic mold,' the fact is that only a few fungi produce toxins on their spores. However, it is best to limit your exposure to all molds.



5 How can I be certain that my home is mold-free?

- You cannot. No home will ever be completely mold-free. Some mold spores are always in the air, indoors and outdoors. No definitions exist for what is a normal or acceptable level of indoor mold.
- While your home will not be free of mold spores, you can help keep mold from growing by controlling moisture and preventing moisture problems.

QUICK FACTS

Notes

Date:

Time:

Name of Consumer:

Consumer Contact Information:

Advice/Action Taken:

Message Taken By:

SOURCES

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For more Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) information, please visit the UGA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION website at www.fcs.uga.edu/Housing