

Mold and Mildew Control

With moisture levels at historic levels, and summer heat on its heels, Mold and Mildew often become a problem. Allergies, infections, and asthma or other chronic respiratory infections can ensue. Tightly sealed homes constructed in the past few decades to reduce drafts, have helped to decrease heating and cooling bills, however, the lack of draft also causes homes to not dry out as fast. Be aware that mold may be present and may be a health risk for your family, if your home has water damage due to: flooding, sewage back-up, plumbing or roof leaks, dampness along crawl spaces, or even from high humidity items like dryer vents or humidifiers.

Generally, mold is most likely to be found where moisture or relative humidity levels are high (greater than 55%). Excess moisture in a home can come from less obvious sources such as moisture from the earth that migrates through concrete walls or the foundation floor. It is important to make sure that water is properly draining away from the home's foundation at all times of the year.

If you find mold growing in your home, affected areas or items should be treated to remove mold spores as soon as possible. One of the most effective and least expensive disinfectants for hard surfaces is chlorine bleach. Use only bleach with 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite. Follow directions on the label or use a solution of one-half to three-fourths cup bleach to one gallon of water. To kill mold, keep the solution on the affected area for 10 to 15 minutes. When cleaning with a chlorine bleach solution, wear rubber gloves to protect your skin. Keep the solution away from eyes and skin and avoid prolonged breathing of vapors. NEVER mix bleach with ammonia or other household cleaners containing ammonia. Clean hard surfaces thoroughly with a detergent solution before disinfecting.

Wearing a respirator or dust mask is advised as spores from mold and mildew can be dangerous to your health. Also, washable items should be laundered with detergent and chlorine bleach, if safe for the fabric. Make sure the entire stain is removed before drying or it may become 'set' in the fabric. Take non-washables to the dry cleaners, and be sure to point out the mold stain for best dry cleaning results.

Home flooding, or large amounts of water require quick action, as it takes only 24-48 hours for mold to germinate and grow. Quick removal and drying of items like carpet, furniture, and stored boxes is important. Mop up or wet vac as much water as possible, and then use a disinfectant or light chlorine bleach solution to scrub walls and floor. Use large fans and dehumidifiers to circulate air and dry a wet area quickly. Open windows to promote drying, if outdoor air is dry.

Absorbent materials such as ceiling tiles, carpet, carpet padding, or soaked mattresses that become moldy may have to be replaced.

John Holman

Murray County Extension Educator Ag/4-H

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