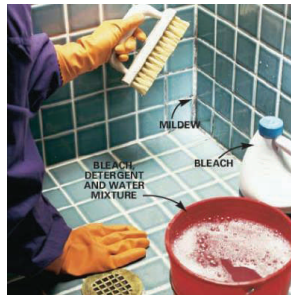


## CONTROLLING MOLD GROWTH

Remediate any moisture problems in your home:

- Stop all water leaks first. Repair leaking roofs and plumbing fixtures. Move water away from concrete slabs and basement walls.
- Increase air circulation within your home, especially along the inside of exterior walls, and ventilate with fresh air from outside. Provide warm air to all areas of the home.
- Move large objects away from the inside of exterior walls just a few inches to provide good air circulation.
- Install and use exhaust fans in bathrooms, kitchens, and laundry rooms.
- Ventilate and insulate attic and crawl spaces. Cover earth floors in crawl spaces with heavy plastic.
- Clean and dry water damaged carpets, clothing, bedding, and upholstered furniture within 24 to 48 hours, or consider removing and replacing damaged furnishings.
- Vacuum and clean your home regularly.
- Vent clothes dryers to the outside.
- Lower the humidity indoors to prevent condensation problems. During humid weather, use air conditioners and dehumidifiers.



## MOLD CLEAN UP

### *Should I clean my home or hire a professional?*

Decide whether to hire a professional or do it yourself. If the job is too large or you feel your health may be compromised or has been affected, consider hiring a professional cleaning company.

### *What can I save? What can I toss?*

Use your best judgment. If the affected material absorbs water, it is considered porous. Porous materials should be thrown out. However, materials such as hard plastic, glass, and metal are non-porous and can be cleaned.

### *What steps should I take when cleaning?*

1. Protect yourself by using goggles, gloves, and breathing protection while working in the area. For small isolated areas of mold growth, a cotton dust mask should do.
2. Seal off area from the rest of your home. Cover heat registers or ventilation ducts/grills. Cover all your furniture. Open a window before you start clean up.
3. Bag all moldy materials in order to throw them away safely.
4. Scrub all affected hard surfaces:
  - a. First with a mild detergent solution, such as laundry detergent and warm water.
  - b. Then, as an optional step, use a solution of ¼ cup bleach to one quart of water. Wait 20 minutes and repeat. Wait another 20 minutes.
  - c. Last apply a borate-based detergent solution and do not rinse. This will help prevent mold from growing again. To find a borate-based detergent, read the ingredients listed on the package label for borates.
5. Let dry and give the entire area a good cleaning: vacuum floors, and wash bedding along with clothes, if exposed.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION



**GREENWICH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
Environmental Services  
622-7838  
M-F 8am—4pm



**CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**  
[www.dph.state.ct.us/](http://www.dph.state.ct.us/)  
Connecticut Department of Public Health  
Environmental Health Section  
Environmental & Occupational Health  
Assessment Program  
410 Capitol Avenue, MS # 11EOH  
Hartford, CT 06134-0308  
Tel: (860) 509-7740, Fax: (860) 509-7785



**CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL**  
[www.cdc.gov/health/mold.html](http://www.cdc.gov/health/mold.html)



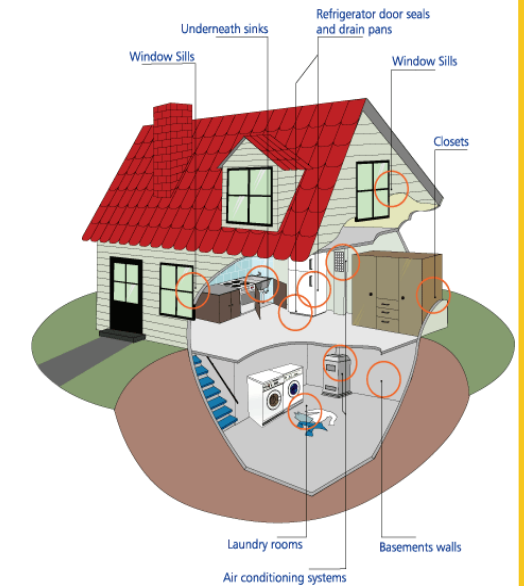
**US EPA**  
[www.epa.gov/iaq](http://www.epa.gov/iaq)  
1-800-438-4318

### TOWN OF GREENWICH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

101 Field Point Road  
Greenwich, CT 06830  
Phone: 203-622-6488  
[www.greenwichct.org](http://www.greenwichct.org)

# MOLD

## and MILDEW



Division Of Environmental Health

## WHAT IS MOLD

With more than 100,000 species in the world, molds can be found everywhere. Molds are microscopic organisms that produce enzymes to digest organic matter and spores to reproduce. These organisms are fungi. They are in the same family as mushrooms, yeast, and mildews.

- ◆ Molds live on plants, foods, dry leaves, wood and other organic materials.
- ◆ Mold spores are tiny, lightweight structures that enable mold to reproduce and travel through the air.
- ◆ A group of mold spores can be seen by the naked eye.
- ◆ Spores often look velvety or powdery, and appear in colors ranging from pale white, yellow, orange or green, to dark brown or black.



Mold on firewood

- ◆ Sometimes mold spores can cause allergic symptoms similar to those caused by plant pollen.

## WHAT MAKES MOLD GROW IN MY HOME

Mold needs three things to grow:

1. Wet or damp environment,
2. Food source (leaves, wood, paper products, wall board, insulation materials, ceiling tiles, etc.), and
3. Temperature similar to what humans live with.

## CAN I BE EXPOSED TO MOLD?



Mold on bread

Mold is virtually everywhere, floating in the air and on all surfaces. Your exposure to mold increases when moldy materials become dried, damaged or disturbed, causing spores and other mold cells to be released into the air and then inhaled. If you handle moldy materials, eat moldy foods or have hand-to-mouth contact you can also be exposed.

## HOW MUCH MOLD DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE ME SICK?

Exposure to large amounts of mold inside buildings is not healthy for anyone. Visible mold should be cleaned up promptly. It is then important to quickly identify and correct any moisture sources before mold levels increase and health problems develop.

Mold symptoms may include:

- Wheezing, breathing difficulties
- Asthma attacks in asthma sufferers
- Dizziness
- Dry, hacking cough
- Sore throat
- Headaches
- Watery, burning reddened eyes
- Nasal and sinus congestion
- Shortness of breath
- Skin irritation



## ARE SOME MOLDS MORE HAZARDOUS THAN OTHERS?

Some types of molds can produce chemicals called mycotoxins. These molds are sometimes referred to as “toxic mold” although the mold itself is not toxic. There are very few reports that “toxic molds” inside homes can cause unique or rare health conditions. If you think you have a mold problem in your home, you do not need to find out what type of mold you may have. All molds should be viewed the same when it comes to health risks and removal.

### What About Stachybotrys?

One particular mold, *Stachybotrys chartarum* (SC), has received media attention. SC is a dark greenish-black, oily looking mold that grows on water-saturated materials of high cellulose content, such as sheetrock and wood. SC needs lots of water to survive and is a relatively uncommon mold. Although SC is capable of producing a mycotoxin, it has not been proven to cause serious health effects.



## SHOULD I BE WORRIED ABOUT MOLD IN MY HOME?

**Yes.** When mold spores are present in large amounts, they may cause allergic reactions, respiratory problems and trigger asthma episodes. It is important to remove mold from hard, nonporous surfaces, and to discard porous items that are contaminated with mold, because even the dead spores can cause allergy and other respiratory problems. Mold itself can also cause structural damage to your home.

## HOW CAN I TELL IF THERE IS MOLD IN MY HOME

You can usually see or smell indoor mold:

1. Look for visible mold growth (it may look cottony, velvety, rough, or leathery and have different colors like white, gray, brown, black, yellow, or green). Mold often appears as a staining or fuzzy growth on furniture or building materials. Look for signs of moisture or water damage (water leaks, standing water, water stains, condensation, etc.).
2. Check around air conditioners and furnaces for standing water. Routinely inspect the evaporator coils, liner surfaces, drain pans and drain lines.
3. Search areas where you notice mold odors. If you can smell an earthy or musty odor, you may have a mold problem.
4. Take a clue from mold-sensitive people who are in your home. If they exhibit symptoms listed previously, you may have a mold problem.

## SHOULD I TEST MY HOME FOR MOLD?

Both the CT Department of Public Health and the Greenwich Department of Health do not recommend testing as the first step to determine if you have a mold problem. There are no air standards for levels of mold indoors and testing almost never affects the final recommendations. If you can see or smell mold or mildew, you have a moisture and mold problem. The first step is to clean, disinfect, and dry out the moldy area. Throw out any porous materials that are moldy, then identify the moisture source and correct it. If you have a serious mold problem, contact the Greenwich Dept of Health for more information.