

# Mold: Problems and Solutions

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If your home was flooded, mold may be present and can pose a health risk. You may see or smell mold on clothing, drywall or furniture, and it may be hidden under or behind items like flooring, appliances or walls. Drying your home and removing water-damaged items is the most important step to repair mold damage.

## Mold Can Cause:

- **Health risks:** Mold spores are microscopic organisms that float through the air and cause problems with allergies, asthma, infections, and other respiratory issues. Mold can cause medical issues for anyone – but infants, children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems may experience more severe reactions. People with breathing problems like asthma or a weakened immune system should stay away from mold.
- **Structural damage:** It is possible to have mold damage even if you don't have other visible damage. If your home has mold, everything that has been contaminated must be cleaned and dried. Items that cannot be properly cleaned and dried within 24-48 hours must be discarded, including building materials and personal property. Children should not take part in disaster cleanup work.

## How to Remove Mold

Mold removal and home repairs may be difficult or dangerous, so it may be best to get help from a professional. If you must remove the mold yourself, follow these steps:

- **Wear Protective Gear:** protective eye masks or goggles, filter face masks (like an N95 respirator), gloves, a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and waterproof boots will help you avoid contact with mold.
- **Dry the Structure:** Clean and dry the structure as quickly as possible. If your house has been empty for several days, open doors and windows to let the house air out for at least 30 minutes before you stay for any length of time. Open inside doors, especially closets and interior rooms. Open kitchen cabinets



and bathroom vanity doors, and wipe them clean with soap and water. When electricity is safe to operate, use fans and dehumidifiers to circulate air and remove moisture. Position fans to blow air out doors and windows. Have your heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning system checked *before* you turn it on so it doesn't spread mold through your home.

- **Remove All Contaminated Materials:** Remove and dispose of anything that was wet and can't be cleaned and dried completely.
- **Clean:** Clean with soap and water. Remove all mold you can see. Dry right away. Do not mix cleaning products together. DO NOT mix bleach and ammonia – doing so will create toxic vapors. After you finish cleaning the home, shower and change your clothes as soon as possible to avoid carrying mold to your current living quarters.
- **Prepare to Repair:** Painting or caulking over mold will not prevent it from growing. Fix the water or moisture problem completely and clean up all mold before you paint or caulk. Remove all mold and disinfect everywhere mold was present before you begin repairs.

## Apply for FEMA Assistance

If possible, **take pictures of damage** before you make repairs to your home. **Keep receipts** for all out-of-pocket repair expenses to show the FEMA inspector – this will ensure they have the most accurate record of your damage and expenses for their report.

To apply for FEMA assistance, call the helpline at **800-621-3362**, visit [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.fema.gov/disaster/assistance) or download the [FEMA App](https://www.fema.gov/mobile-app). If you use a relay service such as video relay service (VRS), captioned telephone service or others, give FEMA your number for that service when you apply.

For in-person help, visit a Disaster Recovery Center, where FEMA specialists can help with applications, answer questions and provide referrals to resources. To find a center near you, visit [fema.gov/drc](https://www.fema.gov/drc).

FEMA is committed to ensuring disaster assistance is accomplished equitably, without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency, or economic status. Any disaster survivor or member of the public may contact the FEMA Civil Rights Office if they feel that they are the victim of discrimination. FEMA's Civil Rights Office can be contacted toll-free at 833-285-7448. Multilingual operators are available.

