



# All About Mold

Mold is a living thing. It grows from tiny mold spores, which are similar to seeds. Mold spores are always in the air, indoors and outdoors. If the spores land on something wet, they can begin to grow into mold you can see and smell. For some people, exposure to mold can lead to irritation and other health symptoms in the throat, nose and lungs. For people with health conditions, such as asthma and other breathing problems, mold can make the preexisting symptoms worse. Learn why and where mold grows, if it is safe to clean up, and how to prevent it from growing.

## How do I know if I have mold growing in my house?



- If mold is growing in an area, you will be able to see or smell it.
- The growing mold can be white, gray, brown, black, yellow, orange or green. It can be fluffy, hairy, smooth or flat and cracked, like leather.
- Even if you can't see the mold, you will be able to smell it. Mold can smell musty, like old books or wet dirt.

## Where does mold grow, and why?



### Some common places mold grows:

- Basements.
- Attics and crawl spaces.
- Under sinks.
- House plants and soil.
- Kitchens.
- Window sills and frames.
- Bathrooms.
- On cloth items.

### Common reasons why mold may grow:

- Dampness or moisture caused by leaks from pipes or roof.
- Dampness or moisture caused by flooding.
- Humidity over 60%.
- Overwatered plant soil.

## Is it safe to clean up mold?



- It may be safe to clean up mold yourself, especially if the mold is small and is growing on something that you can clean with bleach and water.
- One way to stay safe is to hire a contractor to clean up mold if it is covering a large area or if you have health conditions, such as asthma or other breathing problems.
- To clean mold safely, check out the [Steps for Cleaning Mold](#) fact sheet before you start. The fact sheet includes information about how to clean mold off different items.

## How do I prevent mold growth?



- If you discover a leak that allows water or moisture to get into the area, get it fixed as soon as possible. Dry the area right away using towels or fans.
- Always use the vent fan on your stove when cooking, especially when boiling water, to pull moisture out of the house.
- Always use the vent fan in your bathroom when bathing, cleaning or showering to pull moisture out of the house.
- If you have a damp basement or live in a basement apartment, use a dehumidifier to dry out the air.

## Want to know more?

Call the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services at 800-648-6942.

Find more fact sheets about mold at [Michigan.gov/Mold](https://Michigan.gov/Mold).

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) does not discriminate against any individual or group on the basis of race, national origin, color, sex, disability, religion, age, height, weight, familial status, partisan considerations, or genetic information. Sex-based discrimination includes, but is not limited to, discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, and pregnancy.

