

All About Mold



What is mold?

Mold is a living thing. It has tiny seeds, called *spores*, that are always in the air, indoors and outside. The spores are so small, you can't see them without a microscope.

Most of the time, the spores land on something dry and nothing happens. They get sucked up in your vacuum or wiped away when you dust.

But if the spores land on something that is wet, they can begin to grow into mold that you can see.

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

You cannot see mold spores because they are too small, but once the mold starts to grow, you will notice it.



Mold growing on a wall.

Mold can grow on almost anything, as long as there is a little bit of water for a couple of days.

The growing mold can be different colors: 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 very musty, like old books or wet dirt.

Should I hire someone to test for mold in my home?

Having someone test your house for mold costs a lot of money and is not really useful. You can probably find the mold just using your eyes and your nose.

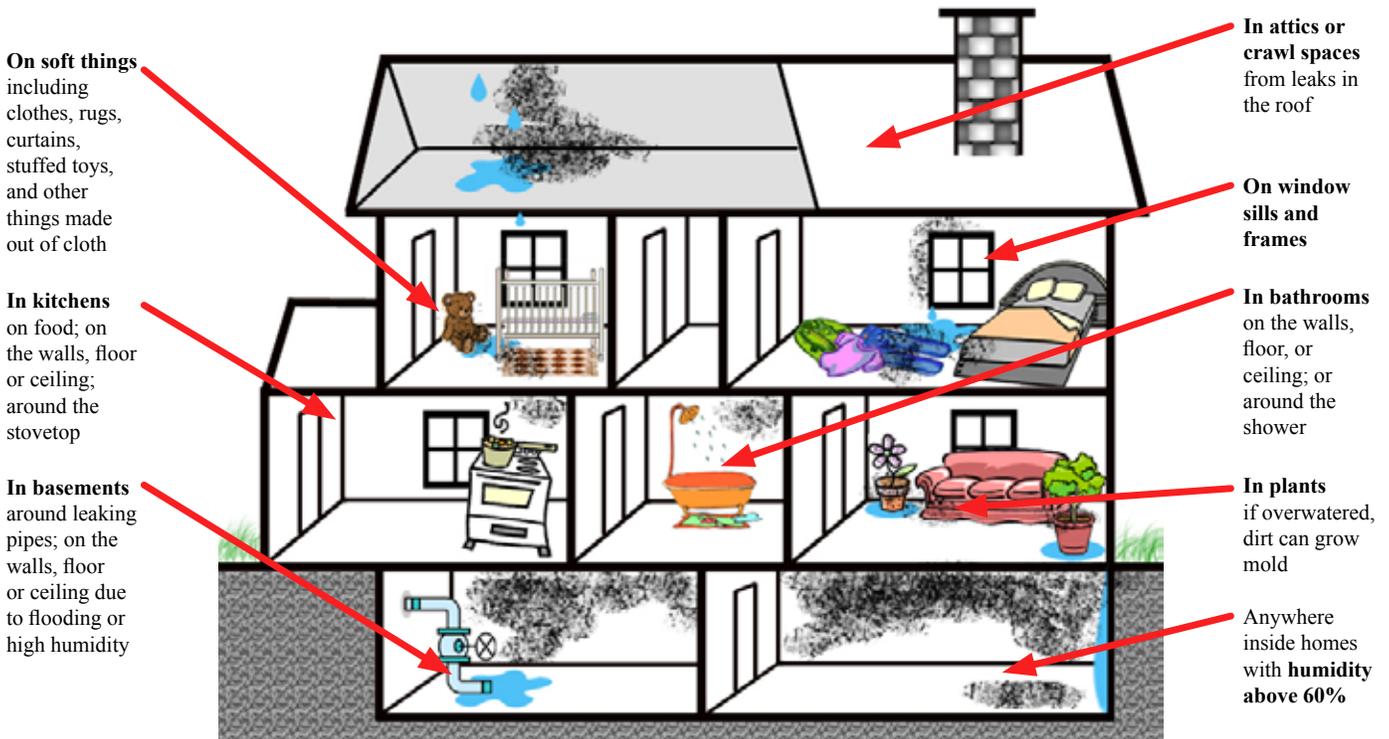
Look in places that you know are often wet or damp, like bathrooms or the kitchen; or that have been wet because of leaks, floods or broken pipes.

If you have mold, you will probably find it in those areas.



Where should I look for mold?

Some common places to find mold are:



If I find mold, can I clean it up myself?



If the mold is growing on something that can be cleaned with bleach and water, and you do not have asthma or other health problems, you can probably clean the mold yourself.

If the area that is moldy is very large or you have health problems, you may want to hire a contractor to do the work for you.

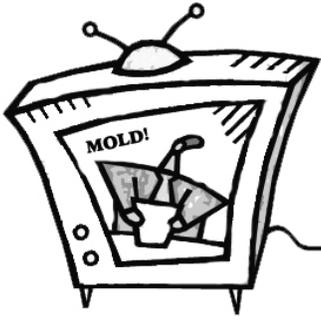
If you decide to clean the mold yourself, please read the Michigan Department of Community Health's "**Steps for Cleaning Mold**" fact sheet before you start.

About Hiring a Contractor

You do not need to hire a special "mold remediator" – regular home contractors can remove the mold and repair any damage caused by it. Look in your phone book or ask friends for a good home contractor in your area.

The State of Michigan does not certify or license companies for mold clean-up. The Michigan Department of Community Health can't recommend any companies to do the work.

What if I think I have toxic black mold (Stachybotrys)?



While stories about “toxic mold” have been on TV a lot, black mold is not worse than any other mold you may find in your house.

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the term “toxic mold” is not really correct. While certain molds are *toxigenic*, meaning they can produce poisons (called *mycotoxins*), the molds themselves are not toxic or poisonous.

You do not need to test your mold to find out if it is “toxic mold” – just clean it up like you would any other kind of mold.

How do I stop mold from growing in my home?

For mold to grow, the spores need about two days of dampness in order to put down good “roots.”

If you discover a leak or a large spill, dry the area right away using towels to soak up as much water as possible. Then use a fan, if you have one, to blow air over the area to dry it completely.



Here are some other things you can do:

- Always use the vent fan on your stove when cooking.
- Turn on the vent fan in your bathroom when taking a shower.
- If you have a damp basement or live in a basement apartment, use a dehumidifier.

Is more information available?

Yes! Contact the Michigan Department of Community Health at 1-800-648-6942 or visit www.michigan.gov/mold for these other fact sheets:

- **Steps for Cleaning Mold**
- **Mold and Your Health**
- **Mold and Renter Disputes**
- **Mold and Home Owners**
- **All About Mold (for Health Care Providers)**

