

FACTSHEET

Mold

Where are mold spores found?

Mold spores are everywhere. Mold thrives in continuously wet conditions and can start to grow within 24 hours after a flood.

What problems can mold spores cause?

Mold spores can cause allergy symptoms, headaches, bronchitis, asthma attacks, lung irritation and skin rashes. People with asthma or other pulmonary illnesses, compromised immune systems, infants and the elderly are more likely to develop mold-related illnesses.

What can people do to control mold in and around the home, especially after a flood?

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) offers the following suggestions to control mold:

- Flooded homes should be thoroughly dried out, which may take several days or weeks.
- When cleaning visible mold, add 1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon water and use this to clean the moldy area.
- Don't mix bleach and ammonia. This can cause an explosion.
- Wet carpet and padding should be removed and discarded.
- Porous materials – those that absorb water – such as sheetrock (should be removed to at least 12 inches above the water line), some paneling, any insulation, mattresses, pillows, wallpaper and upholstered furniture should be discarded.
- Clean wall studs with bleach solution where wallboard has been removed and allow them to dry completely.
- Floors, concrete or brick walls, countertops, plastic, glass and other non-porous materials should be washed with soap and water and then with a solution of one to two cups of bleach to a gallon of water and allowed to completely dry.
- Wear rubber gloves and eye protection when using bleach and make sure area is well ventilated. Consider using an N-95 rated dust mask (available at local hardware stores) if heavy concentrations of mold are already growing.
- Materials that cannot be effectively cleaned and dried should be placed in sealed plastic bags and discarded to prevent the spread of mold spores.
- People allergic to mold and people with asthma or other respiratory conditions should not do mold cleanup.

How do I know that there may be mold?

- Unexplained discoloration on any surface
- Musty odor
- Dark spots on or around vents
- Water stains anywhere
- Peeling or curling of vinyl floors or wallpaper

What do people need to know about professional assistance with mold problems?

If large areas of mold growth are present, professional assistance with clean up may be needed. People and companies conducting inspections for mold or offering mold remediation services in Texas are required to be licensed by the Texas Department of State Health Services. Listings of currently licensed professionals and information about the regulation of mold assessment and remediation in Texas can be found online at: www.dshs.state.tx.us/mold/.

Where can people get more information?

More information about mold and cleaning up after floods can be found online at: www.epa.gov

