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How to Get Rid of Mold

Tips to help you clean up smartly and safely

By Laura Testino



Prevention is key for combating [mold in everyday circumstances](#), where you may have an extra rainy season or a particularly humid summer: keep gutters clean, and landscape in a slope away from foundation, for example. **But when disaster strikes, here are a few pointers for dealing with mold.**

Take Inventory. How much has been affected by water damage? If it's more than 10 square feet, the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) recommends that you consider hiring an experienced professional co

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Evaluate Air Ducts. If you suspect the HVAC system has been contaminated with mold—you see some on some part of the system, for example—don't turn it on, the EPA says, because you may exacerbate the problem by spreading mold further throughout the building. [Here's the EPA's full guide to knowing how and when to have air ducts cleaned.](#)

Wear the Right Gear. If the area is small enough for you to tackle by yourself, the [EPA recommends](#) that you start by suiting up in long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Cover your feet with work shoes or boots. Wear gloves so your bare hands don't come in contact with mold, and choose goggles without vent holes, so mold doesn't get in your eyes. Protect your lungs with an N-95 respirator, which protects against mold, unlike a handkerchief or dust mask.

Clean Safely and Smartly. Mold growth occurs after materials or furnishings are wet for more than 24-48 hours. You can use detergent and water to dry hard materials, per the EPA, but should consider replacing more absorbent materials, like ceiling tiles. It's important that you don't mix cleaning products or add bleach to other chemicals.

Use the Right Tools. You can decrease humidity to the ideal 30-60% by venting to the outside or using exhaust fans with cooking, dishwashing, and cleaning, per the EPA. You can also use dehumidifiers for large areas; these can be rented for certain time frames if you can't purchase one. To remove spores, loosen them and then suck them up with a HEPA-filter vacuum, which you can also rent. Note that killing mold doesn't make it any less dangerous, but just more difficult to locate, says the EPA. Here's how the owner of the TOH TV NOLA project removed mold after [Hurricane Katrina](#).

Finding Help. Check [FEMA](#) for up-to-date information on how you can apply for assistance. Find out if your disaster has been declared [here](#). Keep in mind that there is no application fee for applying for assistance from [FEMA](#), the [U.S. Small Business Administration](#), or your state.

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