



Finding & Dealing with Mould in your Home

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This publication was produced by the Quality Assurance and Facilities teams.

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Introduction

Mould naturally grows in our environment. More than 1000 different species of mould live and grow in the air, water and soil around us, and can easily and quickly grow inside of our homes, where we don't want it to be. Unwanted mould can grow within 2 to 3 days.

Some mould can also be harmful to our health, producing toxins that may make humans or animals sick. Keeping our homes healthy can be impacted by how well prepared we are to look for and deal with mould issues.

This resource has been developed to help people and agencies to find and deal with mould in residential homes.

This resource does not differentiate between mould, mildew or other dark staining that may be found in the home. It can be difficult to tell the difference. If you think it might be mould, we recommend that you treat it as mould. And if you have any questions, you may reach out to a service contractor who specializes in finding and dealing with mould in your area.

Getting Ready

As you look to find mould in your home, it is important to be prepared. A few things that you may want to consider ahead of time:

Preparing your tools



Mould does not need sunlight to grow. Many places that you will look for mould will be dark and hard to see. You will need some tools, like a good flashlight.

Protecting Yourself



Since mould can impact air quality, you may want to protect yourself by wearing an appropriate face mask. You may or may not also want to wear gloves as you look for mould.

Recording What you Find



It is important to make note of what you find,. This will help service contractors know how to help, and will record what the issue looked like before you deal with it. An easy way to do this is by taking a picture. Cell phones are great for this.

Mould Risk Levels

Knowing the risk level of mould issues helps to understand how best to deal with the issue. Here is a general guideline to understand how bad an issue may be:

Minor Concerns

Looking at potential surface mould (or mould that you can see), areas that are less than 10 square feet are considered to be minor and may be dealt with by cleaning the area with a mould control product (such as Concrobium Mould Control).

Moderate Concerns

Areas of mould that cover up to 30 square feet collectively (a sheet of drywall is 32 square feet), or mould issues that are deeper than surface level usually require removal of material. If you are not comfortable with that type of work contact a company specializing in mould for advice. Mould related to water leaks may fall in this category.

Significant Concerns

When mould issues grow beyond 30 square feet or look like they are widespread (like along an entire wall), or if mould is found around heating / ventilation systems, concerns may be more significant. In these cases contact a company specializing in mould to assess, help understand the current risk and come up with a plan to deal with it. When significant concerns are found, they may impact your health and wellness. Calling a mould specialist right away will also help you to know if closing off certain areas of your home is required until the issue can be dealt with.

What to Look for

Mould can sometimes be tricky to find. However, there are some general indicators that there may be mould growing in your home:

MUSTY SMELLS

As you walk around the house check the air for any trace of mould odor, especially in the basement. Mould is often times hard to spot and mould spores are invisible to the naked eye so a musty smell is often a good indicator of a problem.



PATCHES OR STAINS ON THE CEILING

Often times you will find patches of discolouration or stains. These typically include on ceilings under bathroom or in the corners by windows and exterior walls.

WINDOWS

In colder climates we will often find mould growth on the windows due to condensation and lack of ventilation. The mould here is feeding on the dust and can easily be cleaned. The moisture from the condensation must be corrected to ensure mould does not return or spread to other areas.



Common Concerns

In Corners



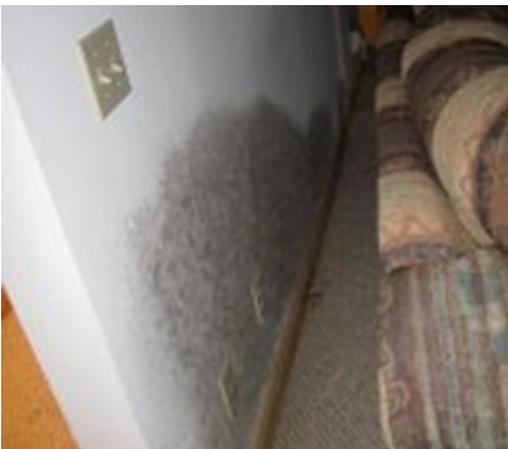
Mould may grow on ceilings and around baseboards, especially in corners, where there is limited air flow.

Under the Kitchen Sink



Mould may grow under kitchen sinks, since there is a lot of water, and the caulking around sinks (to make them water proof) can wear over time.

Behind Furniture



Mould may grow behind furniture since furniture blocks the air flow. Make sure to move and look behind furniture when you look for mould.

Basement Walls



Mould may grow on concrete walls in basements, because water may easily condense on colder walls in warmer homes.

Concrobium Mould Control

Instructions for Use:

Concrobium is an example of a mould control spray to help deal with surface mould. Here are some instructions for use on this product:

Concrobium Mould Control dries on surfaces to create an invisible antimicrobial shield that kills and prevents mould, and gets rid of musty odours. The breakthrough, Health Canada approved solution contains no bleach, ammonia, alcohol or other VOCs and is suitable for use on almost any surface.

Concrobium Mould Control can be used to clean and eliminate existing mould problems, and/or to prevent mould growth in vulnerable areas. In conjunction with using this product, it is highly recommended that the conditions favorable to mould growth (excess water, humidity) be identified and corrected.

As Concrobium Mould Control dries on mouldy surfaces, it forms a hard polymer that physically crushes the mould micro-organisms underneath. That same polymeric barrier stays on surfaces to provide continual resistance against mould growth.

Do not dilute. Do not rinse. Do not use bleach-based products in combination as this may reduce product efficacy.

No special controls, ventilation, or personal protective equipment is required while handling the product. However, to avoid applicator exposure to mould or mould spores during use, consult product label section: "PERSONAL PROTECTION EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICATORS".

Washing areas with Concrobium and rinsing excess dirt/mould with water is acceptable. The area must be left to dry and a coat of Concrobium wiped over the surface and left to dry. This will act as a mould inhibitor as described above.

Don't Forget the Outside

Wooden Soffit



Mould can form on the exterior components of a home.

While it is not normally a health issue (after all, mould spores occur naturally in the air), when significant mould appears on the soffit, it should be dealt with to prevent spread and further contamination.

This is more common on the side of the house facing away from the sun, it does not get the opportunity to dry completely which can lead to the formation of mould.

Tips for Moisture

Actions that will help to reduce humidity:

- Vent appliances that produce moisture, such as clothes dryers and stoves to the outside where possible. (Gas fired appliances such as stoves or heaters produce water vapor and will increase the humidity unless vented to the outside.)
- Use air conditioners and/or de-humidifiers when needed.
- Run the bathroom fan or open the window when showering.
- Use exhaust fans or open windows whenever cooking, running the dishwasher or dishwashing, etc.



Mould growing on a wooden headboard in a room with high humidity.

Actions to that will help prevent condensation:

- Reduce the humidity.
- Increase ventilation or air movement by opening doors and/or windows, when practical. Use fans as needed.
- Cover cold surfaces, such as cold water pipes, with insulation.
- Maintain an appropriate and consistent indoor air temperature

Moisture Control is Key

- When water leaks or spills occur indoors - act quickly. If wet or damp materials or areas are dried 24-48 hours after a leak or spill happens, in most cases mould will not grow.
- Clean and repair roof gutters regularly.
- Make sure the ground slopes away from the building foundation, so that water does not enter or collect around the foundation.
- Keep air conditioning drip pans clean and the drain lines unobstructed and flowing properly.
- Keep indoor humidity low. If possible, keep indoor humidity below 60 percent (ideally between 30 and 50 percent) relative humidity. Relative humidity can be measured with a moisture or humidity meter, a small, inexpensive (\$10-\$50) instrument available at many hardware stores.
- If you see condensation or moisture collecting on windows, walls or pipes act quickly to dry the wet surface and reduce the moisture/water source. Condensation can be a sign of high humidity.



A humidity meter from a local hardware store

Cost—\$3.00

You may need one on each level of the home.

References and Resources

For more information:

Check out the resources available on the Health Canada Website:

- Mould, Dampness and Humidity

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/air-quality/indoor-air-contaminants/reduce-humidity-moisture-mould.html>

- Mould and your Health

<https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/services/first-nations-inuit-health/health-promotion/environmental-public-health/environmental-health/your-health-at-home/mould.html>

- Measuring humidity in your home

http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/schl-cmhc/nh18-24/NH18-24-1-2009-eng.pdf

- The importance of bathroom and kitchen fans

<http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/NH18-24-17E.pdf>

- The basics: protect your home and family

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/home-garden-safety/basics-protect-your-home-family.html>

- Hazard-Check Virtual house tour

<http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/environment-environnement/home-maison/interactive-interactif-eng.php>

