»mould

Mould is a type of fungus which can grow in wet or moist areas. The key to preventing mould growth is reducing dampness in the home.

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» What is mould?

Mould is a type of fungus which can grow in wet or moist areas lacking adequate ventilation, including walls, ceilings, tiles, carpet, insulation material and wood. If moisture accumulates in a building mould will often occur.

» What are the possible health problems from contact with mould?

To reproduce mould produces tiny particles called spores. Spores are carried in the air and may cause health problems if inhaled by people who are sensitive or allergic to them. These include a running or blocked nose, irritation of the eyes and skin and sometimes wheezing. Occasionally, people with pre-existing conditions such as asthma or weakened immune systems may have more severe reactions.

If you or your family members suffer health problems after coming in contact with mould, contact your doctor. In case of an emergency, **phone triple zero**.

» How can I prevent mould growing in my home?

Although mould can be found anywhere, it needs moisture and nutrients to grow. The key to preventing mould growth is reducing dampness in the home. This can be done by:

Maintaining proper ventilation

- Turn on exhaust fans, particularly when bathing, showering, cooking, doing laundry and drying clothes.

- Open windows when weather permits, to let fresh air in and improve cross ventilation.

Reduce humidity

- Limit the use of humidifiers.

- Limit the number of fish tanks and indoor plants.

- Limit the use of unflued gas heaters as they give off moisture.

Remove mould as soon as it appears to prevent it from spreading.

Control moisture/dampness

- Repair all water leaks and plumbing problems as soon as possible eg. Burst water pipes, leaking roof or blocked rain gutters.

- can be fixed by installing a new damp course or waterproof barrier in the wall. Ensure the weep holes and air vents at the base of your home are uncovered. If you have rising or lateral damp an experienced building consultant can check the damp course and recommend ways to fix the problem.

» What can I do if I have mould in my home?

- Remove mould as soon as it appears.
- Take steps to treat the cause of the problem otherwise mould is likely to return.
- Let in fresh air and light, clean regularly and control moisture in your home.
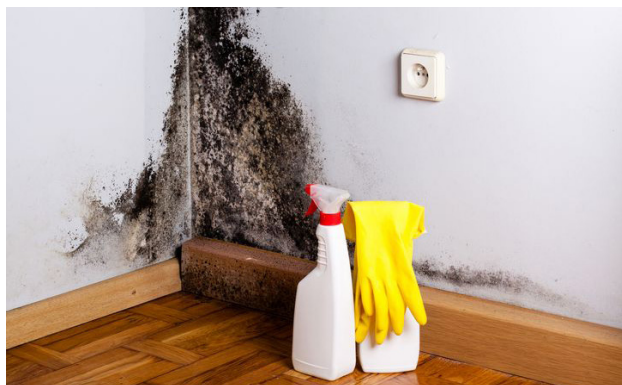
» How can I remove mould from my home?

- For routine clean-up of mouldy surfaces, use mild detergent or vinegar diluted in water solution (4 parts vinegar to 1 part water).

- If the mould is not readily removed and the item cannot be discarded, use diluted bleach, protective equipment is recommended: PVC or nitrate rubber gloves; safety glasses; and safety shoes. Make sure the area is well ventilated while you are cleaning with bleach.

- Ensure the surface is dried completely once cleaned.

- Absorbent material, such as carpet may need to be professionally cleaned or replaced if they are contaminated with mould.

» Should I get tests for mould in my home?

Since most mould is visible, it is generally not necessary to test for mould in the home. However, some mould contamination may be present in cavities or the ceiling.

If you think you have mould in your home but cannot find the source of the problem, you could employ an occupational hygienist. For a fee, these professionals can provide specialist mould testing and consultancy services.

» What if I am renting?

If you rent your home and have taken measures to ensure the building is properly ventilated and mould is still growing, you should raise the issue with the owner or real estate agent. Tenants seeking further advice can contact the **NSW Fair Trading Tenants Advice and Advocacy** on **13 32 20**. Public Housing tenants should call the **NSW Housing Contact Centre on 1800 422 322.**

This information was sourced from NSW Health via *health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets*

» *If you have any questions or concerns please contact:*

Ballina Shire Council's Public and Environmental Health Section Phone 02 6686 1210.
Further advice on the health risks of mould can be obtained from the North Coast Public Health Unit 02 6620 7585.

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