



MOLD CLEANUP: Put away that bleach!

When people hear the word “mold”, they panic. However, mold spores exist everywhere. Many homes have some degree of mold and it affects the Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) even if no negative health issues are noticed.

The first and foremost thing is to get the facts and dispel the myths.

This information is available in more detail through Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation (CMHC). CMHC is the leading authority on Indoor Air Quality. They have developed an IAQ investigation protocol that is becoming universally accepted.

MYTH – We have to test the mold

Do not waste money.

A building science based investigation of IAQ problems is more useful than mold testing.

Information on the type of mold will not change the plan of action - the mold has to be removed anyway. Why spend money that could be put to better use in cleaning or removal?

Only extenuating circumstances should lead to testing. Reasons for testing might include the request of your physician or rare cases where preliminary investigation that does not pinpoint a problem.

FACT – Mold has negative health implications

First and foremost, if you suspect that you are having negative health implications from a suspected mold problem, you should consult your physician.

Amongst adults, those with mold allergies or asthma are most affected. The elderly have reduced resistance to negative health implications.

Children are affected more because they breathe in a greater amount of mold spores relative to their size than adults.

The CMHC protocol begins by asking, amongst other things, questions about your health.

The bigger picture – what to do

Mold is a biological life form, needing food and water to sustain itself.

Elimination of moisture will kill mold, and the most important thing you can do is remove the source of the water. This is an in-depth topic and cannot adequately be addressed here. For more information, refer to relevant CMHC publications like [Diagnosing and Treating Your Wet Basement](#) or [Clean-up Procedures for Mold in Homes](#).

Removing the food source may be difficult, because their food sources are ubiquitous. Various molds feed on sugars and starches or wood and paper based products. Old carpets and affected drywall and wood should be removed.

Replacement with non-paper based drywall, metal wall studs and flooring choices other than carpet may be required.

When do I need help?

Small mold areas can be cleaned up by the

homeowner, but ONLY if the source of the moisture that fed the mold is eliminated, and only if appropriate precautions are taken. A small area is defined as three areas or less, each less than 10 sq ft (approx 3' by 3') in size.

For a medium patch of mold (up to 30 sq ft or 4' by 8') or large mold areas (greater than a sheet of drywall), an expert assessment is required and a contractor experienced in mold remediation will probably need to be consulted.

Contact your local CMHC office or call 1-800-668-2642 for a list of persons who have completed the CMHC Residential IAQ Investigator Program.

Many companies operate outside of CMHC protocols – you should ask specifically if they use this protocol and should get a simple yes or no answer.

MYTH – Use bleach to kill mold

Bleach does not kill all types of mold spores, and even dead spores can cause negative health implications.

Bleach can also react with humic (decaying organic)

substances to produce toxic substances.

Beware those who suggest bleach or other chemicals to kill mold because their information is not current and they will be introducing chemicals which can adversely affect IAQ.

Removal of affected building materials is the best idea, but some mold can be cleaned.

In small accessible areas, mold can be removed by simple and thorough cleaning. Obviously, personal protective measures should be used to protect yourself (N95 dust mask and rubber gloves would be the minimum).

First vacuum with a vacuum that has a HEPA filter or exhausts to the outside.

Next use a simple water and detergent (unscented dish soap) based solution to clean the surface. Wipe the surface dry and vacuum again. Our goal here is to remove as many mold spores as possible.

Guidelines and protocols

There are no specifically established mold remediation guidelines, just

as there is no established “safe” amount of mold. Some contractors follow the same protective measures that are established for asbestos removal.

At a minimum, the area being treated should be isolated from the rest of the house, a fan should be used to pressurize the rest of the house and the area must be thoroughly cleaned.

Indoor Air Quality

Mold and dampness have a significant effect on Indoor Air Quality (IAQ), but this is only one aspect of a professional IAQ investigation.

The CMHC protocol takes into account all of the systems of the home. This “house as a system” approach ensures that one recommended cure is not negated by or does not affect any other system within the home.

<i>Budgeting Guidelines</i>	
IAQ investigation	\$600-1000
Mold cleanup (small)	\$500+
Mold cleanup (medium)	\$1000+
Mold cleanup (large)	\$5000+
Mold air sampling	\$750+
Specific mold testing	\$200+

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