

How to control mould

Immediately clean affected surfaces and dispose of damaged materials

- Mould on small, easily washable surfaces can be eliminated by using the appropriate household cleaning product. Dry the area carefully after cleaning. It is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions and avoid mixing cleaning products.
- Porous mildewed or seriously water-damaged items should be discarded.
- For large-scale cleaning or renovation jobs, it may be necessary to hire a specialized firm.



Look for the source of the problem

Identify and correct any source of water accumulation (broken pipe, flooding, backed up sewer) or infiltration (foundations, ceilings, roof). Also make sure that the ambient air humidity is not too high. In other words, keep your house clean, dry and well ventilated.

▶ **When doing major cleaning and renovating jobs, it is a good idea to protect yourself by wearing gloves and a mask.**

▶ **Susceptible people should leave the affected area or nearby rooms while this work is being done.**

Is air and dust analysis useful?

It is generally not necessary to test the air and dust in your home in order to solve your problem. Effective action can usually be taken without identifying or counting the mould. In fact, if mould is visible or if there are any signs of mould, a careful inspection of your house should allow you to locate the cause, and then determine the most appropriate actions to take to correct the situation.

Where to get help

For health information:

- Call the CLSC's Info-Santé line in your area.
- If necessary, contact your doctor.

In the event of a tenant-landlord dispute:

- Contact the Rental Board for your area.
- Contact your municipal inspection service.
- Contact the association for tenants, consumers, homeowners or property managers in your area.

For technical advice:

- Consult documentation published by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (SCHL).
Telephone: 1 800 668-2642
Web site: www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca
- If necessary, consult a firm that specializes in mould removal.

To help you **choose a company**, you can consult the *Guide pratique du consommateur. Faire face à un sinistre, avant, pendant, après*, in the *Protégez-vous* collection which can be obtained at 1 800 667-4444. Information on this subject is also available on the *Office de la protection du consommateur* (www.opc.gouv.qc.ca) web site or at 1 888 672-2556.

Santé
et Services sociaux

Québec

• Institut national de santé publique
• Société d'habitation

www.msss.gouv.qc.ca

Household Mould

Get Rid
of It!

An
important
health
issue



Québec

What is mould?

Moulds are microscopic fungi found everywhere in nature.

They are carried into the house by drafts, humans and pets. Once inside the house, moulds can grow if they have enough water or moisture and nutrients like wood, cardboard or drywall.

Moulds are often found in damp places, like around the bathtub or windows.

When the amount of mould is small and it is removed regularly, the problem is generally not serious. On the other hand, when there is a large amount of mould present, breathable particles are dispersed into the air, which can lead to health problems in some cases.



What effect does mould have on health?

The most common health problems faced by people exposed to mould are:

- Eye, nose, and throat irritation.
- Runny nose, sinus congestion, frequent cold symptoms.
- Increasingly frequent and serious asthma attacks.

However, these symptoms are not necessarily caused by mould.

Who is most vulnerable?

People exposed to mould have different reactions, depending on their general health condition, their age and the amount of time they spend in the house. The following people are generally most sensitive to mould exposure:

- People who suffer from allergies, asthma and chronic respiratory diseases, and people with multiple chemical sensitivities.
 - Infants and young children.
 - The elderly.
 - People with weakened immune systems, due to chemotherapy, a recent transplant, HIV, AIDS or another disease.



How to check for mould problems

- ▶ Inspect the exterior of the house (roof, attic, eaves troughs, caulking, drainage areas, etc.).
- ▶ Regular housekeeping as well as a complete inspection at least once a year to check for signs of water infiltration and mould hidden behind furniture, in closets, storage areas or elsewhere.



How can you tell if there is mould in the house?

- Visible, often dark-coloured stains on the walls, ceilings or carpets, in cupboards, etc.
- A characteristic musty, earthy or alcoholic odour.
- The appearance of stains, buckling or other signs of water infiltration on walls or ceilings, which may indicate the presence of mould concealed behind building materials.

Excessively high household humidity indicated by the regular presence of water condensation on windows or walls:

- Turn on exhaust fans, particularly when bathing, showering, cooking and doing laundry.
- Make sure that the dryer hose is properly vented outside.
- Regularly empty and clean the water tank in your dehumidifier. Use it on hot, humid days and keep it in an appropriate place, like the basement.

What conditions produce mould growth and how can I avoid them?

Stagnant water, water seepage or water-soaked materials:

- Clean up and dry out any water spill within 24 to 48 hours.
- Dispose of any water-damaged porous materials (mattresses, upholstered or stuffed furniture, drywall, carpets, acoustic tiles, insulation, etc.).



Inadequate ventilation:

- Make sure that the house is adequately ventilated by periodically opening the windows.
 - Make sure that the air exchanger or other ventilation system is correctly installed and regularly maintained.

Lifestyle factors that may contribute to increasing humidity levels in the house:

- Avoid storing firewood inside.
- Avoid constantly drying laundry inside the house.
- Limit the use of humidifiers and make sure that you carefully follow the manufacturer's maintenance instructions.

