

## Mold, Mildew, and Your Home

Molds, also known as mildews, are present everywhere in the natural and indoor environments. In general, they are not a problem unless some building materials like carpeting or drywall become wet and begin growing mold. Outdoors, molds provide a valuable service by breaking down organic materials into nutrients for other living things.

### Health Effects

For most healthy people, exposure to mold – including black mold – will only cause a mild allergic response, such as a cough, runny nose, and eye irritation (hay fever). However, for children and people with health problems, it can cause:

- **Asthma:** For people sensitive to molds, inhaling mold spores can trigger an asthma attack.
- **Infections:** Some molds can cause respiratory infections that are dangerous for young children, the elderly, and anyone with a weakened immune system. Children can experience more respiratory infections if they spend time in buildings with damp and water-damaged building materials.
- **Hypersensitivity Pneumonitis:** In rare cases, mold exposure over a long period of time can cause this inflammation of the lung.

### Detect & Prevent

Mold and bacteria grow quickly. Take these steps to prevent mold growth and exposure:

1. **Control potential water sources.** To prevent mold growth, control the places where water can get in and cause damage, including:
  - Temporary holes in roofing, walls, or siding during construction/renovation.
  - Leaking roofs, windows, siding, crawl spaces, etc.
  - Plumbing or washing machine leaks, dishwasher backups or pump failure, leaking icemaker water line to refrigerators, toilet overflows, slow water pipe leaks inside walls, etc.
  - Bathing/showering areas, cooking areas, indoor plants, or pet urine.
  - Condensation from poorly insulated windows or cold surfaces.
2. **Repair leaks quickly.** Because mold and bacteria grow very rapidly, it is important to fix the source of water intrusion immediately. If not fixed, the mold will simply grow back. Without moisture, microbes cannot grow and will not be a health concern indoors.
3. **Dry wet areas within 48 hours.** Mold and bacteria grow quickly, so dry water-damaged areas within 48 hours. Discard any building materials that have not been dried and can support mold and bacterial growth. Materials that are not dried within 48 hours will grow mold, and the mold spores will remain in the material. Dead and dried mold causes more health problems than moist.

### Remediate

Go to [www.BoulderCountyAir.org](http://www.BoulderCountyAir.org), and click on Mold & Mildew for instructions about how to safely clean up mold. In general:

- Remove the affected organic building materials.
- Remove drywall at least 2 foot beyond the visual water mark of any flood that was not dried within 48 hours. This is commonly referred to as “doing a flood cut.”
- Use a disposable “Type N-95” respirator to limit your exposure to airborne mold. These are available at hardware stores and online for \$12-\$25.

For more information about mold and mildew, go to:

**[www.BoulderCountyAir.org](http://www.BoulderCountyAir.org)**

