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# Green Isn't Always Environmentally Friendly!

It may be green, but it's definitely not healthy!

Many moulds are simple organisms that require minimal conditions to grow and colonize. However, all moulds require some form of moisture to grow. It can take as little as one day for this process to start. If the source of the moisture has stopped then the mould becomes dormant, but will begin growing again when water is resupplied.

Mould can adapt to a wide range of temperatures, and depending on the species, it may be able to grow almost anywhere. Although mould can grow on inorganic surfaces such as glass, tile, or stainless steel, it must feed off an organic source such as drywall, fabric, insulation, wood or stucco. Mould can spread very easily through any heating, ventilation and air conditioning system.

Moulds produce mycotoxins, a poisonous substance, which travel easily through the air and can be breathed in.

## How Do You Know When You Have Mould?

There are a number of signs to indicate possible mould growth. Some of the more common symptoms are:

- Stained ceiling tiles or walls
- Musty, earthy, or urine type odors
- Black, brown, orange, pink, or green speckles around plumbing, grout, or tile
- Mild to severe unexplained illnesses in combination with any of the above

Some of the possible causes of mould include:

- Leaky roof or flashing
- Flood or hurricane damage
- Plumbing leaks at drains and gaskets

- Lack of ventilation
- Faulty air conditioning, ventilation or heating systems
- Cracked or disconnected hoses to kitchen appliances

## Mould Can Be A Serious Health Hazard

Mould can cause damage to property as well as have serious consequences to people. Some individuals are particularly sensitive to mould and exposure to mould can cause nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, or respiratory problems. Although some medical symptoms of mould are difficult to recognize, any suspicious symptoms should be checked by a doctor. People exposed to frequent or large amounts of mould may develop more severe reactions, which can include fever, shortness of breath, and invasive pulmonary infection usually with a fever, cough, and chest pain.

## How Can You Protect Yourself?

Mould is extremely difficult and expensive to eradicate, and therefore it is preferable to prevent mould from growing in the first place. This can be accomplished through some loss prevention measures that can include the following:



**Knowing your business matters.**

- Keep the humidity level in buildings/homes below 50%
- Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier during humid months
- Ensure adequate ventilation, including exhaust fans in kitchens and bathrooms
- Add mould inhibitors to paints before application
- Clean bathrooms with mould killing products
- Use air purifiers
- Do not carpet bathrooms or basements
- Repair leaky roofs, walls and basements
- Promptly clean, disinfect and dry everything after a sewer back-up or flooding

### **What Do You Do If You Have Mould?**

In order for the clean up to be effective you need to firstly identify and remove the source of the excess moisture and then use the simplest cleaning method that will effectively and safely remove the mould growth.

A normal healthy person can clean up small and moderate areas although they are handled a little differently. A small area is considered less than one square meter (10 square feet) of visible mould contamination. The person doing the clean up should wear an approved N95 disposable respirator, gloves and eye protection. You should bag and dispose of porous material with visible mould growth. As these materials are removed, check exposed areas for mould growth and clean as needed. Less porous materials (such as glass, plastic, concrete or metal) can be thoroughly cleaned using a strong detergent followed by lots of water.

Moderate areas are defined as more than one square meter but less than three square meters (10 square feet but less than 30) of visible mould contamination. These areas can be cleaned using the same procedure as above but also require additional steps to contain the mould damaged areas. This includes the use of well sealed (with tape) plastic barriers, and the regular use of a HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) vacuum.

Large areas, more than three square meters (30 square feet), require the expertise of a professional mould clean up contractor.

Since mould damage is typically not covered by insurance, it is important to be aware of the signs of mould and to act quickly to prevent it from developing any further.

### **Partners In Prevention**

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