

Mold Remediation for Tenants and Landlords



REDUCE YOUR EXPOSURE TO MOLD



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Epidemiology and Response Division
Environmental Health Epidemiology

Working Together to Address Mold Issues

Whether you are a tenant or a landlord, it is our hope that the information offered here will help you solve mold problems together. Read on to learn more about mold, how it grows and how it can affect you. Then work together to detect moldy conditions, keep mold away and keep your home and property safe.

Causes and Common Areas for Mold Growth in Your Home

What is mold and where is it found?

Molds are fungi in the environment that cause decay of dead plant and animal matter. Molds create tiny spores to reproduce, just like some plants produce seeds. These microscopic spores travel through the air and when they land on damp spots will begin to grow into mold and feed on organic matter.

Why does mold grow in my home?

Mold needs two things to grow: wet or damp conditions and a nutrition source such as wood, wallboard, insulation, ceiling tiles, paper products, dust, paints, carpet, or fabric. When mold grows indoors, it often means the spores have enough moisture, nutrients, and the appropriate temperatures to develop into mold. The musty, earthy smells indoors are signs of mold.

The common areas for excess moisture sources in the home are:

- The roof, windows, and plumbing due to leaks.
- The kitchen and bathrooms when there is poor or no exhaust ventilation.

If after moving in you find mold in the house the first step is to clean up the mold and second is to find and fix the water leak.

- Rooms with humidifiers.
- Rooms with wet clothes drying indoors or clothes dryers exhausting indoors.

Therefore, tenants and landlords should work together to quickly identify and correct high moisture conditions before mold grows and health problems develop.

Which areas in the home are commonly affected by mold?

- The kitchen: look for loose and warped tile and leaks in pipes or discoloration of walls—especially under sinks.
- Look at walls inside cabinets; under throw rugs, behind and under the refrigerator.
- Bathrooms: look for leaks in pipes, discoloration of walls near sink, tub and toilet, and warped tiles.
- Windows in all rooms and doors to the outside: look for chipping of paint or plaster or discoloration of walls or rotting wood frames.
- Ceilings in all rooms—discoloration in paint or warping areas.



Common places for mold growth are cabinets under sinks, often due to pipe leaks.

Can mold affect my health?

Exposure to mold inside a home is not healthy for anyone. Certain individuals, such as infants and young children, elderly, people with weakened immune systems (such as people with HIV infection, cancer chemotherapy patients and so on) and those with respiratory conditions such as asthma, allergies or chemical sensitivities are more likely be affected by mold exposure.

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Renters: Signs of Mold Growth in Your Home

Renters: What are signs of mold I should look for?

- Look for evidence of moisture: condensation on windows or walls is an important indication of a moisture problem.
- When you are looking at places to rent, look for any moisture/mold problems before moving in or signing the lease.
- Mold can be many different colors
- It may look furry, slimy, or powdery.
- Mold has a musty, stale, or earthy odor and it usually grows in damp places, such as bathrooms and basements.
- Warping floors or discoloration of walls and ceiling can be indications of moisture problems.
- Indoor combustion problems can also lead to excess moisture. Have fuel-burning appliances routinely inspected by your local utility or a professional heating contractor.
- If there is a musty, stale, or earthy odor, it's probably mold.



Condensation on windows is a sign of excess moisture.

Will the State test, check, or clean my home for mold?

The New Mexico Department of Health provides health information about mold and mold cleanup, but does not test, clean or conduct environmental health assessments for mold.

Can I completely avoid contact with mold spores?

People are in contact with mold spores every day, usually by touching or breathing spores in. Avoiding mold spores entirely is impossible because spores are always in the air. Spores get indoors through open doorways, windows, vents, and heating and air conditioning systems. Mold spores can also attach themselves to clothing, shoes, bags, and pets and be carried indoors.

To avoid spores growing into mold on household surfaces, you must control moisture in your home. Molds will grow wherever they have enough moisture, nutrients and the appropriate temperatures. Controlling dampness and fixing leaks is the most important step in controlling mold growth. You can also reduce spores in your home in common household dust by dusting and cleaning surfaces often.

Renters: Working With Landlords to Remove Mold

What should I do if I find mold after moving?

If you find mold in the house the first step is to clean up the mold and second is to find and fix the water leak. Here are recommended steps for working with your landlord to remove mold in the rental home :

1. **Notify the landlord** or property manager immediately when you find mold. Submit a work order in writing to request the removal of the mold and to remedy leaks. Keep a copy of this letter and send the original by certified mail with return receipt requested.
2. As part of the tenant record, **take pictures** of the mold and/or mold damage and of any problem area(s) where moisture collects on a regular basis. For example, take pictures if there is a roof leak after every rainstorm or a window doesn't quite shut and rain comes through. This provides evidence if you have to go to court as a result of the landlord's failure to make repairs. Also show the problems to witnesses.
3. **Document all actions about your notification to the landlord.** Include such dates, times, what is said, and what is agreed upon.
4. **Follow up** with the property manager after the letter has been received. Request documentation of plans to address the problem.
5. **Document all actions taken by the landlord** such as dates, times, and what was corrected.
6. If you or a family member are having **respiratory or other health problems** you believe are related to mold **see a health care professional**, and get copies of the medical evaluation results.
7. If medical tests are conducted, get copies of tests and lab results. These may be useful later.
8. Send a **certified** letter to your landlord explaining the problem along with copies of the photos and the medical information.

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Landlords: Working With Tenants to Resolve Mold Growth

Landlords: What if I am a responsible landlord and I continue receiving complaints from the tenant?

1. You and your tenant may need to do a walk-through of the house together to find out the source of the problem.
2. As a landlord you also have a right to remind the tenant of their responsibility to keep the premises clean and dry, as agreed to in the lease.



For Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Renters and Landlords:

It is important that you follow protocol set forth by HUD policies. If difficult situations continue and the problem isn't being resolved, please work with the HUD office with which you are affiliated. If you don't know which office to contact, call the main HUD office in Albuquerque at 505 346-6463. For HUD guidance about mold, please visit: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/healthyhomes/mold.cfm>.

Resources for Tenants and Landlords

Where can I go for more advice about Tenant and Landlord issues?

An excellent reference is NM Legal Aid's *Renter's Guide*: <http://www.lawhelp.org/Program/3501/index.cfm?pagename=homepage>

Phone list of local code enforcement offices www.rld.state.nm.us/cid/PDFs/City%20and%20County%20Building%20Departments.pdf for a

For Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rentals <http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/healthyhomes/index.cfm>.

Landlords and Renters may contact the New Mexico Attorney General <http://www.nmag.gov/office/student/renting.aspx>

Healthy Homes Training Center and Network http://www.nchh.org/Portals/0/Contents/Healthy_Housing_Checklist.pdf

Tenant/Landlord hotline Santa Fe residents - To get guidelines for handling situations and the legal approaches to protect tenants and landlords: If you live in Santa Fe call 505 983-8447.

Law Access New Mexico - Renters may call at 505 998-4529 in Albuquerque to get advice.

Lawyer Referral Service - Eligible renters over age 55 needing legal aid may call 505 876-6657 and

in Albuquerque 505 797-6005.

Senior Citizen Law Office - Eligible residents over age 60 in Bernalillo County may call 505 265-2300.

Residents within the City of Albuquerque may call the 311 hotline.

Where can I go for mold information or to learn how to remove mold growth myself?

To learn how to clean up small areas of mold visit: www.epa.gov/mold/cleanupguidelines.htm

Where can I receive more information about mold health effects or cleanup?

The following are our resources that provide

information related to mold issues:

CDC: www.cdc.gov/mold

EPA: www.epa.gov/iaq/mold

OSHA: www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib101003.html

HUD: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/healthyhomes/mold.cfm>

NCHH: <http://www.nchh.org>

NMDOH EHEB: www.nmhealth.org/eheb/

