

General Mold Cleanup Guide

A practical guide from Holistic Environmental Solutions for safely addressing small areas of mold growth in your home.

Discovering mold can be concerning, but a small area (less than 10 square feet) is often manageable without professional help if you follow proper safety and cleaning procedures. This guide provides the information and checklists you need to handle minor mold cleanup effectively. Our goal is to empower you with unbiased, science-based steps for a healthier home.

Important Safety Disclaimer: When to Stop and Call a Professional

This guide is strictly for small, isolated mold problems (e.g., a few connected spots totaling less than a 3x3 foot area) on non-porous or semi-porous surfaces.

IMMEDIATELY STOP and call a licensed professional assessor at (305) 793-4913 if you encounter any of the following:

- **Health Symptoms:** Occupants experience new or worsening respiratory issues, allergies, or other health concerns when in the home.
- **Extensive Growth:** The mold patch is larger than 10 square feet or you find it in multiple areas.
- **HVAC Contamination:** You see mold on or near vents, or smell a musty odor when the system runs. Do not run the system.
- **Contaminated Water Source:** The moisture is from a sewage backup, floodwaters, or other "Category 3" water source.
- **Saturated Porous Materials:** Porous materials like drywall, insulation, or carpet are soaked and cannot be dried quickly.
- **Hidden Mold Suspected:** You smell a strong musty odor but cannot find the source, suggesting a hidden leak behind walls or under floors.
- **Immune-Compromised Occupants:** Someone in the household is elderly, an infant, or has a compromised immune system.

1. Before You Start Checklist

Proper preparation is the key to safe and effective cleanup. Do not start cleaning until you can check off every item.

- ☐ **Moisture Source Fixed:** The leak or source of moisture has been completely identified and repaired. Cleaning without fixing the source is pointless—the mold will return.

- ❑ **Ventilation Planned:** You have a plan to ventilate the room to the outdoors. Open a window and place a fan blowing out of the room.
- ❑ **Area Isolated:** You have closed the door to the room and covered any sensitive furniture or items with plastic sheeting.
- ❑ **Supplies Gathered:** All necessary tools, cleaners, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are ready and accessible.

2. Required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Mold spores can become airborne during cleaning. Protect yourself by wearing the right gear.

- ❑ **Nitrile Gloves:** To protect your hands from cleaning agents and mold.
- ❑ **Eye Protection:** Goggles or safety glasses (without vents) to prevent spores from contacting your eyes.
- ❑ **Respirator (N95 or better):** A properly fitted N95 respirator is essential to prevent inhaling spores. Ensure it seals tightly to your face.
- ❑ **Long Sleeves & Pants:** Wear old clothing that can be laundered immediately after or disposed of.

3. Basic Containment for Small Areas

Your goal is to prevent spores from spreading to other parts of your home during cleanup.

- Close the door to the work area.
- Cover the heating and air conditioning vents (supply and return) in the room with plastic sheeting and tape.
- If possible, place a portable fan securely in a window to exhaust air to the outside.
- Lay down plastic sheeting on the floor and over any nearby furniture.

4. Tools & Supplies Checklist

- ❑ Unscented detergent or mild, non-ammonia cleaner
- ❑ EPA-registered disinfectant (optional, use according to label directions after cleaning)
- ❑ Spray bottles for water and cleaning solutions
- ❑ Microfiber cloths and/or disposable rags
- ❑ Medium-stiff scrub brush
- ❑ HEPA-filtered vacuum with a brush attachment
- ❑ Heavy-duty (6-mil) trash bags
- ❑ Painter's tape and plastic sheeting

5. Step-by-Step Mold Cleaning Procedure

Step 1: Dry the Area Completely

Ensure the affected area and materials are fully dry for at least 24-48 hours before cleaning.

Step 2: Remove and Bag Porous Items

Carefully cut out and remove any small patches of porous material that got wet and show mold growth (e.g., drywall, insulation, carpet padding). Place them directly into heavy-duty trash bags, seal the bags, and remove them from the property.

Step 3: Clean Surfaces

Lightly mist the moldy surface with a spray bottle of water to prevent spores from becoming airborne. Clean the area with your detergent solution, scrubbing as needed to remove all visible growth. Wipe the area clean with a fresh, damp cloth.

Step 4: Dry and HEPA Vacuum

Allow the surface to dry completely. Once dry, use a HEPA vacuum with a brush attachment to capture any remaining dust and spores from the cleaned area and its immediate surroundings.

Step 5: Repeat if Needed

If staining remains, repeat the cleaning process. A disinfectant can be used after cleaning, but it is not a substitute for removing the mold. **Never mix bleach with ammonia** or other cleaners, as this creates toxic gas. Avoid using "mold foggers," as they do not address the source.

6. What Can Be Cleaned vs. What Must Be Discarded

- **Cleanable (Non-Porous):** Metal, glass, hard plastic, tile, and sealed concrete.
- **Cleanable with Care (Semi-Porous):** Sealed or painted wood, plaster.
- **Must Be Discarded (Porous):** Drywall, insulation, ceiling tiles, carpet and padding, wallpaper, unsealed wood, and fabric. When in doubt, throw it out.

7. Post-Cleanup Verification Checklist

- ☐ **No Visible Mold:** The area is free of any visible growth or discoloration.
- ☐ **No Musty Odors:** The room smells clean and fresh.
- ☐ **Area is Dry:** Confirm with moisture readings (if possible) and ensure the area remains dry for at least 72 hours.
- ☐ **Source is Repaired:** The original moisture problem is confirmed to be resolved.

- ❑ **Room Cleaned:** The entire room, including all surfaces, has been wiped down and/or HEPA vacuumed.
- ❑ **Filters Replaced:** HVAC filter for the system has been replaced.

8. Long-Term Mold Prevention Tips

- Keep indoor humidity between 40-50%.
- Use exhaust fans in kitchens and bathrooms during and after use.
- Repair all plumbing leaks and roof leaks promptly.
- Maintain your HVAC system and change filters regularly.
- Consider using a dehumidifier in damp basements or crawl spaces.
- Ensure grading, gutters, and downspouts direct water away from your foundation.

When You Need an Unbiased Expert

Holistic Environmental Solutions is an independent environmental assessment firm. We do not perform remediation. Our role is to provide you with unbiased, scientific data about your property through professional testing, moisture mapping, and creating a detailed remediation protocol that a separate cleanup company would follow. This separation of duties ensures there is no conflict of interest and that the solutions are tailored specifically to your needs.

If your mold issue is bigger than you can handle or you need definitive answers, partner with a team you can trust.

Ready for an inspection grounded in honesty and science? Schedule your assessment today and get the clarity you need. Call us at (305) 793-4913 or request your inspection online.