

Ask CDC

Mold

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

Welcome to *Ask CDC*, the podcast that answers *your* questions. I'm your host, Susan Laird. This week, a listener wants to know the risks associated with mold after a natural disaster or severe weather.

After natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods, excess moisture and standing water contribute to the growth of mold in homes and other buildings. If your home has been flooded, mold may be present and may be a health risk for your family.

Asthma, allergies, or other breathing conditions may increase your sensitivity to mold. People with immune suppression, such as HIV infection, cancer patients taking chemotherapy, and organ transplant recipients are more susceptible to mold infections.

Removal and cleaning are important because even dead mold may cause allergic reactions. If you or your family members have health problems after exposure to mold, contact your health care provider.

Clean up and dry out the building within 24 to 48 hours to help prevent mold growth. Open doors and windows and use fans to dry out the building. Point fans outside, not inside. Clean wet items and surfaces with detergent and water.

You may recognize mold by sight - are the walls and ceiling discolored, do they show signs of mold growth or water damage; or by smell- do you smell a bad odor, such as a musty, earthy smell or a foul stench?

If there is mold growth in your home, you should clean up the mold *and* fix any water problem, such as leaks in roofs, walls, or plumbing. Controlling moisture in your home is *the* most critical factor for preventing mold growth.

To *remove* mold growth from hard surfaces, use commercial products, soap and water, or a bleach solution of no more than one cup of bleach in one gallon of water. Never mix bleach or bleach products with ammonia. Use a stiff brush on rough surfaces, such as concrete. When in doubt, take it out.

All porous, non-cleanable items that have been wet for more than 48 hours should be removed permanently from the building. Carpeting, carpet padding, upholstery, wallpaper, drywall, floor and ceiling tiles, insulation material, some clothing, leather, paper, wood, and food are all considered non-cleanable.

If you plan to be inside the building for a while or if you plan to clean up mold, you should buy an N95 mask at your local home supply store and wear it while in the building. Make sure you follow instructions on the package for fitting the mask tightly to your face. If you go back into the building for a short time and are not cleaning up mold, you do not need to wear an N95 mask.

For more information about mold, please visit www.cdc.gov/mold.

Thanks for listening. To submit *your* question to Ask CDC, email us at askcdc@cdc.gov.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.