



The Homeowner's Mold ID Tool



There are many different species of molds and while they are a natural and important part of the environment outside, they are unwelcome guests when it comes to their growth indoors. In nature, molds serve an important function - they help to break down dead, organic matter. They do this by essentially ingesting their host material.

While they do the work of breaking down the organic matter, they also rapidly reproduce. Tiny spores, which are invisible to the naked eye, can float through the air and if the conditions are right in an indoor environment, those spores may opt to settle there. A favorable condition for microbial growth simply includes access to plenty of moisture.

When mold spores land on surfaces that are damp or wet, they are able to thrive and grow. Inside of a home, mold can begin to breakdown surfaces, ruining structural components of the house or the valuable possessions inside of it. Mold spores also have the potential to cause health problems for those living in the home, especially in those who already have respiratory problems or compromised immune systems.

For these reasons, it is always important to be aware of the potential for mold growth and to know how to identify it quickly and accurately. Here are recommended steps for a homeowner that needs to identify and address mold growth in their home:

Check for 3 Indicators:

Most people do not realize they have mold growing in their home until they notice one or more of the following indicators. The sooner you become aware, the better. Here's what to look for:



- 1 A musty odor in your home or place of business:** The gas, which is an MVOC (microbial volatile organic compound), is naturally produced as a byproduct of mold growth and it carries the well-known musty odor that is often the first tell-tale sign.
- 2 Water-related home conditions:** If you notice high humidity in your home (condensation on windows, pipes or walls would be a sign of this), be on guard. Or, if you know that your home has experienced water damage from leaks, flooding, etc. in the past, then you'll want to remain aware of the potential for mold growth. Anywhere that there is excess moisture, there is a higher possibility of having a mold problem.
- 3 The onset of physical symptoms:** Is anyone in your home experiencing prolonged, uncharacteristic and undiagnosed nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, wheezing, skin irritation, asthma, headaches, respiratory complaints or other allergic reactions? If so, remember that while mold does not *always* cause health issues, these conditions *can* be a sign of mold growth in your home.

Look for the Microbial Growth in 3 Possible Locations:

If you've determined, based on the ID indicators above, that your home probably does have a microbial growth issue that needs to be solved, then it is time to FIND that mold! While you look around to identify the location of your growing mold, it's best to turn off the HVAC and any fans so that you don't unintentionally spread disturbed mold spores into new locations. There are 3 types of locations where you should look for mold:

- 1 Visible mold growth locations:** These kinds of locations include areas such as window frames, shower walls, the intake air of the HVAC system, etc. Mold growth in visible spots is obviously the easiest kind of mold to ID.
- 2 Hidden mold locations:** If you believe that you do have mold growth in your home, but are having a hard time finding the mold, then it's time to do some investigatory searching. Try checking under carpet, behind vinyl wallpaper, on the top of ceiling tiles, or inside wall cavities.
- 3 Don't forget those unexpected locations (inorganic):** Most homeowners know that mold likes to grow on organic surfaces. You can picture it on an old loaf of bread that's been left on the counter or on the wood baseboard downstairs. But remember that mold can even grow on inorganic surfaces, so check glass, mirrors, plastic pipe, and metal surfaces too!

ID the Mold:

There are dozens of different species of mold that can grow in homes and depending on your geographical location, your home's moisture level and other conditions, your property may be more susceptible to certain types. If you have a professional remediation company come out to assess your home, they will be able to properly identify the type of mold as well as the extent of its growth. In the mean time, you can use the list below as a tool to help ID the mold yourself.

Botrytis: Anywhere where humidity is high and ventilation is poor, this mold is right at home! Bathroom mold is often found to be Botrytis.

Chaetomium: This mold has a particularly strong "musty" smell and is often found growing on water damaged drywall.

Cladosporium & Fusarium: Do you live in a relatively cool climate? Believe it or not, you're still not out of the reach of these molds, which grow just fine in cool conditions. They like fabrics and wood surfaces, so if you've discovered mold on your carpet or inside of cabinets, one of these two may be the culprit. Be aware that exposure to Fusarium can cause infections in those who are already immune compromised.

Alternaria: Do you have mold growing in particularly damp areas of your home (for example, your shower or sink)? This type of mold is known for growing in homes that have suffered from water damage and unfortunately for neighbors, it is also known for spreading quickly from one home to another.

Penicillium: Anywhere that there has been water damage, there is the opportunity for this blue/green mold to grow. You may find it on a wide variety of surfaces, included some furniture (like mattresses). This mold is known for its ability to quickly spread from one room to the next and cause health irritations, such as sinus infections and allergic reactions.

Stachybotrys Chartarum: The media hype around mold has labeled this black, slimy mold as “toxic.” While it does sometimes cause allergic reactions in those who are exposed to it, the mold in itself is actually not toxic. It is the compounds produced by the mold, called mycotoxins, that are the culprits behind the health issues associated with this type of mold. This mold often has a characteristic musty odor and can be found growing in damp locations. If you’ve found black mold growing around the condensation on a leaky pipe, there is a good chance that it is Stachybotrys Chartarum.

Serpula Lacrymans: Did you find yellow mold growing on dry rotted wood? You’ve probably found this species, which feeds on the wood while it spreads.

Aureobasidium: If you’ve found pink and black mold growing on a window sill, chances are that it’s Aureobasidium. This mold loves to spread across wood, paper and painted surfaces, so walls and window frames are some of it’s favorite spots.

Trichoderma: Similar to Stachybotrys Chartarum, this species produces pesky mycotoxins and therefore is known for causing potential allergic reactions. It likes to grow on surfaces that have plenty of moisture (wet carpet is one of its favorites).

Aspergillus: This mold actually prefers to grow inside. If someone in your home is suffering from hypersensitivity pneumonitis (inflammation of the lungs), Aspergillus may be the cause.

Ulocladium: If your home has experienced flooding, it could be a prime location for Ulocladium growth. This species requires access to more moisture than other molds, so it is frequently found in basements and other areas where extensive water damage has left carpet or drywall significantly wet.

If you have taken the above steps to check for indicators and look for the actual mold spores, then you are well on your way to solving your microbial growth problem. The next step is removing the mold safely and thoroughly. Depending on the severity of the mold growth and whether or not members of your household are being physically impacted by the presence of the mold, you may choose to hire a professional remediation company or attempt to do it yourself.

Whichever route you choose, we recommend giving us a call first. Here at Advanced Mold Diagnostics, we can help you schedule quick, professional service to take care of your mold so you never have to think about it... or we can simply come out for an assessment and walk you through the proper steps to safe DIY home remediation. We'll tell you what equipment you need, where to rent it and what cleaning materials and supplies you'll want to purchase. **This information alone can save you thousands of dollars!**

So, be sure to give us a call today at 610-285-7997.

