

# Guidelines for the Control of Mould in the Workplace

Moulds and fungi are found in nature and are necessary for the breakdown of leaves, wood and other plant debris. These micro-organisms can enter a building directly or by their spores being carried in by the air. In a home or building, moulds and fungi are usually found growing on wood, drywall (plaster/gypsum/Sheetrock(R)), upholstery, fabric, wallpaper, drapery, ceiling tiles, and carpeting.

The key factor is moisture because moulds and fungi need it to grow. As a result, moulds and fungi are most often found in basements, kitchens and bathrooms.

In modern buildings, moisture is present as the result of:

- Flooding;
- Leaks in the roof or plumbing;
- Sealed buildings that do not allow excess moisture to escape;
- Sources such as cooking facilities, showers, etc., or
- Excess humidity.

\* In this document, the term mould will be used to mean any of mould (mold), mildew, yeasts, and fungi. This resource does not differentiate between mould, mildew or other dark staining that may be found in the home. It can be difficult to tell the difference. If you think it might be mould, it is recommended that you treat it as mould.

All employees must understand the potential health effects of mould and be aware of the need to regularly check for leaks and water damage and report concerns to the Direct Support Supervisor. Guidelines for the Control of Mould in the Workplace (SA27) will be reviewed by employees on an annual basis.

## How do moulds contribute to health problems?

The presence of mould does not always mean that health problems will occur. However, for some people the inhalation of the mould, fragments of the moulds, or spores can lead to health problems or make certain health conditions worse.

In general, the most commonly reported symptoms include:

- Runny nose or nasal congestion;
- Eye irritation;
- Cough or congestion;
- Aggravation of asthma;
- Fatigue;
- Headaches, and
- Difficulty concentrating.

Moulds can also exacerbate (make worse) the symptoms of allergies including wheezing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath as well as nasal congestion and eye irritation. People who are immuno-suppressed or recovering from surgery are usually more susceptible to health problems from moulds. Document any symptoms using SA15 Employee Health Symptom Log and inform the Direct Support Supervisor.

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## What can I do to prevent mould contamination?

Moulds can grow almost everywhere and on any substance providing moisture is present. Thus, the best method of prevention is to reduce the amount of moisture.

Keep the relative humidity between 30% and 50%. To accomplish this goal, prevention measures include:

- Vent showers and other moisture generating sources directly to the outside.
- Run the bathroom fan or open the window when showering and for 30 minutes afterwards
- Keep surfaces clean and dry. Squeegee and dry the walls around the bathtub and shower after showering or bathing
- Clean often to prevent small patches of mould from getting larger
- Have plumbing leaks repaired promptly
- Control humidity with air conditioners and/or dehumidifiers\*.
- Use exhaust fans when cooking, dishwashing, or laundering (especially in the food service or laundry areas) or when cleaning large areas.
- Check range hood to ensure there is adequate air movement.
- Cover pots while cooking
- Check that your clothes dryer vents to the outside and remove any built up lint from outside vent hood.
- Clean the lint tray every time you use the dryer
- Leave washing machine door open when not in use
- Keep the building and the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in good repair.
- Clean up any floods or spills immediately (within 24-48 hours). See below for more information on cleaning, etc.
- Regularly disinfect/wash rubber shower mats and shower curtains
- For floors and carpets, remove spots or stains immediately. Reduce the amount of water used when cleaning carpets as much as possible.
- Do not install carpet around fountains, sinks, bathtubs/showers or directly on top of concrete floors that are prone to leaks or frequent condensation.
- Increase ventilation or air movement by opening doors and/or windows when practical (not on humid days/nights)
- If you see condensation or moisture collecting on windows, walls or pipes, act quickly to dry the wet surface and reduce the moisture/water source.
- If you use the basement for storing items, use plastic bins with lids instead of cardboard.

\* It is important to remember that when using air conditioners and dehumidifiers to keep them in good condition. Empty any water collectors regularly so this water does not contribute to the moisture problem! Run a dehumidifier in your basement to help reduce dampness year-round (if necessary). If you use humidifiers, ensure that they are cleaned regularly.

## What should I look for in the home/site?

A visual inspection is the most reliable method of identifying mould problems. The most common signs of water damage will be discolouration and staining. Moulds will most often appear as dark spots, stains or patches.

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While conducting the inspection, be sure to look at, in, or under the following places:

- Ceilings/Ceiling tiles;
- Walls including wallpaper, and condition of drywall (Sheetrock (R) [USG], gypsum wall board);
- Floors;
- Window sills;
- Insulation;
- Carpet;
- Furniture (condition of fabric, upholstery, etc.);
- If possible, look behind duct work and walls (a mirror will help);
- Condition of any cardboard or paper present
- Under bathroom and kitchen sinks
- Basement walls
- Around Shower/bath enclosures in bathrooms
- Rubber bath mats and shower curtains

As you walk around the house check the air for any trace of mould odor, especially in the basement. Mould is often hard to spot so a musty smell can be an indicator of a problem.

In colder climates, we often find mould growth on the windows due to condensation and lack of ventilation. The mould here is feeding on the dust and can easily be cleaned.

Also look for "standing water" (wipe up immediately) - puddles of water around and under sinks, tubs, drip pans for dehumidifiers, air conditioners, and refrigerators that can be contributing to the moisture in the building and provide conditions where mould can grow.

## How should I clean up the mould?

In general, once mould has been discovered, it is recommended that porous materials such as dry wall, ceiling tiles, fabric or carpet be thrown out and replaced rather than cleaned whenever possible. Non-porous materials such as metal, glass, hard plastic and semi-porous materials such as wood and concrete can be cleaned and reused (if structurally sound).

How to clean the mould depends of the size or extent of the damage.

Always use the appropriate PPE's when cleaning up areas of mould. Use a disposable N95 mask as well as gloves and eye protection.

### For small areas (less than 10 square feet-minor concern):

- May be dealt with by cleaning with a mould control product

### For medium areas (10-30 square feet-moderate concern)

- It is not necessary to vacate the building, but persons who work close by or those who are immuno-suppressed, those with chronic lung problems (such as asthma, allergies, etc.) or those recovering from surgery may wish to work in a different section or area on those days.

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- Dust suppression methods such as misting the surface lightly before cleaning is recommended.
- Clean the area with a mould control product. \*Always Rinse and dry the area well if recommended by the manufacturer\*
- Area should be dry and free of any visible contamination when the work is completed.
- Any porous materials with mould must be removed, sealed in heavy duty plastic bags and discarded.

**For larger areas (more than 30 square feet-major concern) or areas of high contamination and/or areas that are difficult to access, a professional should be called in to deal with the removal.**

**PREVENTION OF LEAKS AND WATER DAMAGE IS KEY TO CONTROLLING THE GROWTH OF MOULD. REGULARLY CHECK FOR LEAKS AND WATER DAMAGE AND IMMEDIATELY REPORT TO YOUR SUPERVISOR**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ verify that I have reviewed the Guidelines for the Control of Mould in the  
Print Name

Workplace information. I understand the potential health effects of mould and am aware of the need to regularly check for leaks and water damage and report any concerns to my Supervisor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Name (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Name (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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