Iowa Department of Public Health
Division of Environmental Health

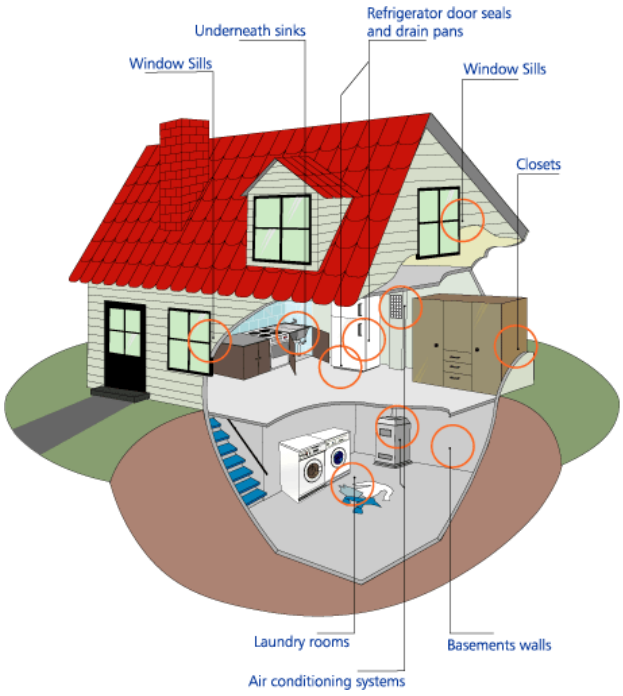
Frequently Asked Questions about Mold

Overview: Mold is a natural part of the outdoor environment. Mold is present in outdoor air at some level throughout the year. In order for mold to grow indoors, there must be a significant source of water, moisture or humidity.

How do I know if I have a mold problem?
If you see or smell mold in your home, you probably have some mold growth.

What causes mold?
Mold growth problems are ALWAYS caused by a moisture or water problem. It does no good to clean the mold if you haven't solved the water issue first.

Where should I look for mold?
Look for mold in places where there may be water issues (under sinks, in laundry rooms, kitchens, bathrooms, where a roof has leaked, in the basement, etc.).



Should I test my home for mold?
No. The Iowa Department of Public Health does **NOT** recommend testing for mold for several reasons:

- Mold is present at some level in outdoor air throughout the year so test results may be unreliable.
- It is very difficult, even for professionals, to get meaningful test results for mold.
- Mold testing is very costly.
- There are no regulatory levels or guidelines for comparing test results.

Will mold make me sick?
Mold can cause an allergic reaction in some individuals. About 50% of the population of the United States is allergic to mold. If you are NOT allergic to mold, it is unlikely that you will have health effects from mold exposure. If you are allergic to mold, your reaction depends on how sensitive you are to mold. Symptoms of an allergic reaction are

- Itchy or watery eyes, runny nose,
- Sinus drainage,
- Respiratory discomfort, and
- Cough.

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I've identified the area covered in mold, how do I clean it up?

If the material is **non-porous** (it **<u>will not</u>** absorb water) such as a concrete, tile or vinyl flooring, plastic patio furniture, plastic toys, tub surrounds, paneling, molding, etc., use a mild household detergent solution to wipe away the mold. If it is a **porous** surface (it **<u>will</u>** absorb water) such as drywall, carpeting, furniture, bedding, clothing, stuffed animals, books, etc., remove, discard, and replace the items or surfaces the mold is growing on.

It is not necessary to use bleach on mold, unless your intention is to disinfect the surface. If you choose to use bleach to disinfect an area or to remove mold stains, follow these guidelines:

1. Clean the surface first and remove all debris.
2. Provide ventilation with a fan, open window, or door.
3. Use ¼ cup of bleach per gallon of water and keep the surface wet for 15 minutes before wiping it down.
4. Never mix bleach with ammonia or any other cleaners.
5. Rinse the area with clean water.

For more information contact: Iowa Department of Public Health at **(515) 281-7726**