

Mold and moisture: what to watch for

Easy · 30 min for a small cleanup · \$

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ Detergent and water, and a scrub brush
- ☐ Long rubber or nitrile gloves, and goggles without vent holes
- ☐ An N-95 respirator (about \$12–\$25), for anything more than a tiny spot
- ☐ A humidity meter (\$10–\$50 at hardware stores), if you want to measure
- ☐ Your phone, to photograph the damage before you clean

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 **Look and sniff.** Mold can be spots of many colors, and it can smell musty. If you see or smell it, remove it.
- 2 **Think water first.** If mold is a problem, you have to clean it up and get rid of the moisture source. Mold grows around leaks in roofs, windows and pipes, and where there's been flooding. Condensation on windows, walls or pipes is a sign of high humidity.
- 3 **Renting?** Report every plumbing leak and moisture problem to your landlord or building manager right away. Take photos first, and put the report in writing so there's a record.
- 4 **Size it up.** If the moldy area is under about 10 square feet, roughly a 3-by-3-foot patch, you can usually clean it yourself. Bigger than that, a lot of water damage, or water from sewage calls for a professional.
- 5 **Suit up: long gloves to mid-forearm, goggles without vent holes and, to limit what you breathe in, an N-95 respirator that fits properly.**
- 6 **Scrub hard surfaces with detergent and water, then dry them completely.**
- 7 **Throw out what you can't clean.** Porous things like ceiling tiles and carpet may have to go, because mold fills their tiny spaces and can be impossible to remove completely.
- 8 **Check your work.** You're done only when the water problem is fixed, there's no visible mold or musty smell, and the spot still looks dry a little while later. Stains can remain even after the mold is gone.

Watch out Never mix bleach with cleaners that contain ammonia. It makes toxic fumes. Bleach isn't recommended for routine mold cleanup anyway. If you use any disinfectant, open windows and keep air moving outside. Don't paint or caulk over mold. The paint is likely to peel.

DAD NOTE *Mold is a water problem wearing a costume. Fix the water.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/your-place/cleaning-and-laundry/mold-and-moisture-what-to-watch-for/

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.