

Follow Best Practices for Clean-up of Smaller Mold Problems

Smaller mold problems are ones with a total combined area of mold contamination area equal to or less than the size of your front door.

Cleaning up a mold problem needs to be approached thoughtfully and carefully, with knowledge of available best practice principals. Following best practices for cleaning up a mold problem is extremely important because:

- Failure to follow best practices can make your mold problem worse, leading to additional cost to clean and repair.
- Using best practices protects clean-up workers from exposure to mold spores.
- Using best practices protects building occupants from exposure to mold spores.

TIP

Do you need a professional? Hire a professional if:
The combined area of mold contamination is larger than your front door or
Possibly hidden behind your wall material

Before you start a mold clean-up project, create a clean-up plan that identifies the scope and strategy you will use. Every mold clean-up project should follow established best practice, even very small ones.

RESOURCES

- [U.S. EPA Guide for Mold Remediation in Schools & Commercial Buildings](#)
- [NYC Dept. of Health Guidelines for Assessment & Remediation of Fungi in Indoor Environments](#)

Summary of Best Practices for Smaller Mold Clean-Up Projects

- 1** Fix the problem. Fix the moisture problem that caused the mold growth. Without this critical first step, the mold will likely come back.
- 2** Protect yourself. Put on gloves, a mask (N-95 disposable respirator recommended), goggles, long pants, and a long sleeve shirt. These protect your eyes, airways, and skin.

- 3** Know what you've got. Before disturbing walls or doing any demolition, determine first if there's either lead paint or asbestos present in the demolition area. If you suspect the presence of either lead paint or asbestos, follow the guidance in these resources:

RESOURCES

- State of Maine Lead Page maine.gov/dep/waste/lead/index.html
- State of Maine Asbestos Page maine.gov/dep/waste/lead/index.html
- EPA Learn About Asbestos [Learn About Asbestos | US EPA](#)
- EPA Learn About Lead [Learn about Lead | US EPA](#)

- 4** Remove it. Your primary goal is to remove the mold from the indoor environment. Killing it or covering it with paint may not prevent it from growing back. Plus, dead and/or covered mold spores can still cause health problems. Remove the moldy material from the building instead of killing or covering it.

TIP

What about bleach? Bleach may temporarily kill mold, but it doesn't remove it. More importantly, bleach is an EPA-registered pesticide and a significant lung irritant. In Maine, only licensed, pesticides applicators are allowed to use a pesticide in non-owner occupied units. When it comes to bleaching away a mold problem, don't do it.

5

No people. Keep the areas impacted by the clean-up project unoccupied until project completion. This includes the project area, and any interior walkways/pathways used to go in and out of the house from the project area.

6

Contain. Cleaning up mold spores is similar to cleaning up dust from taping and sanding drywall. Like drywall dust, mold spores will spread everywhere if given the chance. Close off and seal the work area to prevent mold spores spreading to other indoor spaces.

7

Cover. Electronics, carpets, furniture, and other items that can't be removed from the clean-up area should be covered with plastic and sealed with tape.

8

Cleaning. You can scrub mold off of hard surfaces with soap (dish washing liquid or detergent) and a damp rag. Examples of hard surface materials include linoleum, tile, vinyl, plastics and metal. Soft, absorbent, or porous materials may have to be thrown away. Mold can grow in the tiny holes/spaces in the material and can't be cleaned away. Examples of soft surface material include ceiling tiles, carpet, and furniture.

TIP

If you are unsure about how to clean an item, or if the item is expensive or of sentimental value, you may wish to consult a specialist. Specialists in furniture repair, restoration, painting, art restoration and conservation, carpet and rug cleaning, water damage, and fire or water restoration are commonly listed in phone books. Be sure to ask for and check references. Look for specialists who are affiliated with professional organizations.

9 Do not disturb. Try not to break apart the materials containing mold, which can spread mold spores everywhere. If cutting out drywall or other materials, make your cuts outside of the moldy area: 1-2 feet outside moldy area in every direction is recommended.

10 Assess your skills. If you aren't comfortable building a wall, you probably shouldn't take one apart without professional help.

11 Bag it. Place all moldy materials in a heavy-duty plastic bag (such as a contractor bag) and seal the bag BEFORE carrying it through an indoor space for disposal.

12 Know when you need help. Small mold clean-up projects (about the size of your front door) may be done by non-professionals as long as best practice guidance is followed. Larger projects or projects where mold may be hidden within wall cavities require the assistance of an adequately trained and qualified professional.

TIP Hire a mold inspection or remediation professional affiliated with or certified by the [National Environmental Health Association](#) (NEHA), the [American Industrial Hygiene Association](#) (AIHA), the [Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification](#) (IICRC), or the [American Council for Accredited Certification](#) (ACAC) to inspect, repair, and restore the damaged parts of your home. Many of these organizations have directories with lists of local professionals.

13 Clean up your mess. The work area and any areas used to go in and out of the building should be either:

- HEPA vacuumed (a vacuum equipped with a high-efficiency particular air filter)
- OR
- Cleaned with soap or detergent using a damp cloth and or mop.

14 Make it better than before. Once moldy materials have been removed and the area cleaned according to best practice principles, repair the affected area. Consider using materials that may prevent future problems, such as fiberglass or moisture-resistant drywall instead of paper backed gypsum drywall in damp areas like bathrooms and basements.

15 The white glove test. Make sure all areas of the project are left dry and dust-free.

16 Revisit. Inspect the area a month after the work is completed. Make sure there is no sign of moisture damage or mold growth. Confirm occupants are not having health effects.

