

Managing Mould

After a cyclone or flood, the heat, humidity, residual water and poor ventilation can cause mould to grow. Breathing in, eating, drinking or touching mould can cause health problems, especially for people with asthma, sensitivities, allergies or pre-existing respiratory conditions.

Reduce the risk of mould-related health problems by ensuring that mould is removed safely and ensure that action is taken to stop or minimise future mould growth.

Identifying areas with mould

Sometimes you can see mould when it discolours walls, ceilings and other surfaces. If you can't see it you might be able to detect a musty, unpleasant odour instead. Other areas in rooms that should be checked for moisture or condensation include; corners of rooms; carpeted areas and near air-conditioner units.

Air out rooms

Remove items that maybe a source of moisture i.e. indoor plants, fish tanks. Open all the doors and windows to dry out the area as quickly as possible. Use fans to speed up the process if you can.

Cleaning mould

Abrasively cleaning mould from a surface, such as with a dry brush, is not recommended. This could release spores into the air, which may cause adverse health effects and spread mould to other areas.

There are many effective products for killing and removing mould from walls, floors and other hard surfaces. Household cleaning agents or detergents can do an effective job if used correctly, as can other cleaning solutions such as:

- a solution of three parts vinegar and two parts water
- a solution of 70% methylated spirits and 30% water
- a solution of tea tree oil and water.

If School Cleaners are required to remove mould from surfaces (other than floors), they should only use the mould remover currently on the preferred supplier arrangement (PSA) for cleaning chemicals (Peersol). This mould remover can be used for the removal of mould spores and fungal control on surfaces and for tile and grout cleaning. Peersol should not be used on floors as it may leave a slippery residue if the floor is not rinsed properly.

Using bleach is not recommended as it is not an effective mould killer. However, bleach will help to eliminate other disease-causing organisms that may be present because of contaminated floodwaters. Do not mix cleaning agents. For example, mixing bleach and ammonia can produce toxic fumes.

Items that can be washed, such as stuffed toys and linen, should be washed as usual. If in doubt, take them to a professional cleaner. Otherwise discard the items as advised by your local council.

Non-porous items such as glass-ware and some plastics can be washed in hot water with a good quality disinfectant and air dried. If using a dishwasher, clean and disinfect it first. Do the wash using a full cycle and with hot water.

Air conditioning and other ventilation units may provide a good environment for mould and other bacteria to grow. Using the unit without cleaning it properly first can cause mould spores to become airborne and be inhaled or spread to other areas. It is recommended that you make sure that school cleaners are cleaning non-ducted air conditioning units regularly and that ducted systems and ventilation units are receiving their scheduled servicing.



Protecting yourself

Ensure that when touching and cleaning mouldy items that you protect your hands and nails by wearing good quality rubber gloves. Protect your eyes by wearing safety goggles with closed in sides.

Standard dust masks do not provide adequate protect from microscopic spores and bacteria. To avoid inhalation of mould spores, wear an N95/P2 disposable respirator and be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions and fit the mask properly.

Wear protective clothing that can be thrown away or washed easily.

Preventing mould growth

Reducing the amount of moisture is the best way to control mould growth. While you can't control factors like rain, you can repair other sources. Ensure that leaky plumbing, roofs and other fixtures, are repaired as soon as possible.

Plants growing on or close to external walls can hold in moisture and promote mould growth. Make sure your walls and weep holes are clear of plants and soil.

If you have taken measures to prevent or remove mould from growing in your buildings and require further assistance or support, please contact your Regional Infrastructure Manager.

Useful links

<https://www.qld.gov.au/housing/public-community-housing/mould/>

<https://www.qld.gov.au/community/disasters-emergencies/returning-to-buildings/>

