

# Managing Mould

After a cyclone or flood, the heat, humidity, residual water and poor ventilation can cause mould to grow. People can be exposed to mould through inhalation, skin contact or ingestion. Most healthy people will not experience health problems from contact with mould, however the risk increases for people with asthma, allergies or other respiratory conditions. Those who have a health condition or are undergoing medical treatment that lowers their immunity may also be more sensitive to mould. **Reduce the risk of mould-related 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 not visible, you might detect a musty, unpleasant odour instead. Check for moisture or condensation in corners of rooms, carpeted areas and near airconditioner units. 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.

## Preventing mould growth

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

General internal mould removal around sinks and wet areas is a duty that cleaners should perform progressively throughout the year. For recurring or extensive mould issues, firstly consult with your School Facilities Operations Advisor. If the recurring mould is a result of a facilities issue which requires rectification, the Schools Facilities Operations Advisor will advise the school to contact their Regional Infrastructure Advisor. (Staff can access contact details for their region on OnePortal).

Airing out rooms will assist with moisture control. Reduce the moisture level (humidity) in air - increase ventilation (if outside air is cold and dry), or dehumidify (if outdoor air is warm and humid). 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 possible.

## Mould removal

Mould removal from **external hard surfaces** is a duty that cleaners should perform progressively throughout the year. This task is performed outside normal daily cleaning activities and is best suited during the school vacation periods. Consideration should be made to the timing of this task particularly with environmental impacts (e.g. wet seasons in the tropical north, localised flooding etc).

In some circumstances the removal of mould from external walls may be too difficult because of height or restricted access. Possible controls could be to engage an external contractor if the risk is not acceptable or if there is more than a light mould infestation. Review the [Working at Heights Guideline](#) for more information.

Removal of localised mould growth from **internal surfaces** e.g in a bathroom or a window frame, or small area of settled mould spores on a ceiling tile are duties that cleaners should perform as per the Cleaning Frequencies Guide. For more information refer to the *Cleaning Facts Sheet - Mould Remediation – Internal and External Surfaces* located at the School Facilities Operations SharePoint.

In the event that a natural disaster occurs, or there is a significant contamination of a large area with active mould growth and associated spores, complete the Mould Notification Checklist (included in the *Mould*

*remediation Facts Sheet* - be sure to include photos). The Principal or Business Manager is to contact the region's Infrastructure Services team and lodge an Unplanned Maintenance request. QBuild may be engaged to manage the rectification work to be completed through professional contractors. **Department cleaners are not to perform cleaning duties under these circumstances.** Schools and workplaces can access their QBuild [customer hub](#) for more information about mould events..

## Curriculum resources

Curriculum related items other than facilities related surfaces e.g. items that can be washed, such as stuffed toys and linen, should be washed as usual. Non-porous items such as glassware and some plastics can be washed in hot water with a good quality detergent and air dried. If using a dishwasher, clean and disinfect items first. Do the wash using a full cycle and with hot water. If in doubt, take them to a professional cleaner. Otherwise discard the items as advised by your local council.

## Air conditioning and ventilation units

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.

Whilst school cleaners are responsible for cleaning accessible split-system filters, schools should seek professional advice related to service maintenance of all air-conditioning units particularly following emergent weather events.

For further information on general cleaning, please refer to the *Cleaning Facts sheet - Split System Air-conditioning Filters* located at the School Facilities Operations SharePoint.

## Protecting yourself

Consider the risks associated with cleaning up mould and determine the most effective approach for any light mould infestation.

- Wear protective clothing as identified which can be thrown away or washed easily.
- 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 protection 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](#).
- Manage **all chemical products used for mould cleaning** as per the [Chemical management procedure](#) including completing pre-purchase risk assessment before purchase. Add the product to Chemwatch, complete ILO and UN risk assessments if the product has an orange or red hazard rating, and store according to incompatibility requirements listed in the product's safety data sheet.

## More information

- Queensland WorkSafe – [Managing mould](#)
- Queensland Health – [Dealing with mould after storm, cyclone or flood](#)
- Queensland Government – [Mould and damp and Returning to affected buildings](#)
- [QBuild customer hub](#) - Mould Management Procedure (Q Build customers only)