

Get Rid of Mold

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Release date:

November 18, 2012

Release Number:

4086-020

LINCROFT, N.J.-- Everywhere they look, survivors of Hurricane Sandy see reminders of the destruction – fallen trees, washed out roads, smashed windows. But the most persistent reminder may be the least visible: mold.

The microscopic fungus grows wherever moisture is present – in debris, inside walls, under floors, in attics. If not treated, mold can cause disease, trigger allergic reactions and damage materials long after the storm.

The good news: mold, and its close relative mildew, can be controlled. Once a home is habitable, dry it out with fans, dehumidifiers and vacuums. Remove all wet items including carpeting, furniture, insulation, food products and bedding. Any material that has been wet more than 48 hours should be thrown out!

Unsaturated porous material, such as drywall, ceiling tiles, furniture that contains wood by-products and carpeting, and non-porous items – metal, glass, wood, plastic – can be treated in a few simple steps:

- Wear gloves, a mask and eye protection. Make sure the area is well ventilated.
- Wash items with non-ammonia based detergent and hot water and allow to dry.
- Disinfect cleaned surfaces with a solution of a cup and a half of bleach in a gallon of hot water. Let the solution stay on the surface at least 10 minutes.
- Rinse with clear water and allow to dry.
- Monitor treated materials for several days. If mold develops, discard them.

Severe mold infestations should be treated by qualified professionals. Survivors who have flood insurance should carefully document the damage with photos, receipts and samples from water-damaged goods.

The primary concern is health. Survivors should take precautions, because mold affects the nervous system, causes headaches, mood changes, memory loss, respiratory problems, nasal and sinus congestion and skin, eye, nose and throat irritation.

For more information about mold, its removal, its prevention and associated health problems, go to the [New Jersey Department of Health Mold website](#). See also the FEMA publication [Mold & Mildew: Cleaning Up Your Flood-Damaged Home](#) and FEMA video, [Eradicating Mold and Mildew](#).

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