



## INDOOR MOLD After South Carolina's Severe Flooding 2015

### Presence of Mold after a Flood:

- After a flood, excess moisture and standing water contribute to the growth of mold in homes and other buildings.
- Steps can be taken to prevent mold growth if wet items are cleaned and dried within 24 to 48 hours. Make sure you only enter your home once it is safe.

### Signs of Mold:

- Mold can be recognized by sight or smell, or present no signs at all (hidden behind walls or under floors).
- Sight (Mold growth often appears on walls and ceilings, looks like spots and can be many different colors.)
- Smell (You may smell a strong unpleasant odor that is musty or earthy.)

### People at Greatest Risk for Health Effects from Mold:

- If you are allergic to mold or you have asthma, allergies, or other breathing conditions, being around mold may make your condition worse.
- If you have a chronic lung condition or a weak immune system (such as people with HIV infection, cancer patients taking chemotherapy and people who have received an organ transplant), you could be more susceptible to mold infections in your lungs.

### Possible Health Effects of Mold Exposure:

- People who are sensitive to mold may have a stuffy nose, irritated eyes, wheezing, or skin irritation.
- People who are allergic to mold may have difficulty breathing or have shortness of breath.
- People with weakened immune systems or chronic lung diseases may develop mold infections in their lungs.
- If you or your family members have health problems after exposure to mold and you think that mold is affecting your health, please contact your doctor or other health care provider.

### Cleaning Wet or Moldy Items after a Flood:

- Provided your home is safe to enter, the sooner you can dry out your home after a flood the better likelihood of minimizing mold problems and perhaps even preventing the growth of mold at all.
- Water damage specialists or mold remediation companies have experience with clean ups of flooded homes and can provide you the peace of mind of knowing mold problems will be properly taken care of. At a minimum, a maintenance or service professional that is experienced in mold clean up should check and clean your home heating, ventilating and air-conditioning (HVAC) system before you turn it on. If the HVAC system was flooded with water, turning on the system may spread mold throughout the house.
- If you choose to perform the flood clean up yourself, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers the following information:
  - To protect yourself from potential exposure to mold, buy an N-95 mask at your local home supply store and wear it while cleaning your home. (An ordinary dust mask or handkerchief will not protect you from mold.)
  - Hard surfaced, non-porous items which do not absorb water can be cleaned using soap and water, and disinfected with a bleach solution of no more than 1/2 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water. (Never mix bleach with other household cleaners. Mixing bleach and ammonia can produce dangerous toxic fumes.) Nonporous materials include tile floors, counter tops, showers, tubs, metal objects, plastic, glass and other hard nonabsorbent materials and surfaces.
  - Porous materials soak up water like a sponge. Items that cannot be dried thoroughly within 24-48 hours of flooding are much more difficult to disinfect and may need to be replaced to prevent mold growth. Porous items include drywall, carpet, mattresses, fabrics and furniture made of particle board.

**Additional Information and Resources:**

- Visit the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's website:
  - <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/>
  - <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/>
- Visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's website:
  - [http://www2.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/flood\\_booklet\\_en.pdf](http://www2.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/flood_booklet_en.pdf)
  - <http://www2.epa.gov/mold>
- Consult a Professional Mold Remediation Consultant (check the Yellow Pages under Mold or Water Damage Restoration)
- Visit the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation's website to check to see if a contractor has a contractor license:
  - <https://verify.llronline.com/LicLookup/Contractors/Contractor.aspx?div=69>
- Call the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control at 898-9387 (in the Columbia area) or toll-free at 1-888-815-3509.



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