

Floods

Protect Yourself From Mould

After a flood, it's important to get rid of mould in your home to protect your health and that of your family.

Mould is a tiny fungus that is everywhere in our environment. It grows indoors and outdoors (except in winter). When it grows, mould releases spores into the air that are small enough to breathe in; this can cause health problems especially for people in the following groups:

- People with severe allergies, asthma or other respiratory conditions
- People with weak immune systems
- Young children
- Older adults

Note: If possible, those people should leave their homes until cleanup is complete.

Health effects

Mould can cause or aggravate

- allergic rhinitis – symptoms similar to those of hay fever
- asthma
- common respiratory infections: cold, sinusitis, bronchitis, etc.
- eye, nose or throat irritation

Note: In most cases, health problems or symptoms disappear once mould has been removed or the person is no longer exposed to it.

How to recognize mould

Mould is not always visible. Look for signs of mould: musty, earthy or alcohol-like odours; fuzzy green or black stains on walls or ceilings and in cupboards.

After a flood, there can be mould in damp materials, as well as allergens and irritants. As a result, spores are dispersed in the air. For this reason, testing the air is not useful and an unnecessary expense.

Protect yourself while working by wearing

- Protective clothing: rubber boots and gloves
- NIOSH-certified N95 protective mask
- a visor or safety glasses

Note: Wash work clothes every day, separate from other clothing.

If you have health questions, call
Info-Santé or Info-Social at 8-1-1
santemontreal.qc.ca

Prevent mould after water recedes

The key to preventing mould is to lower the humidity. It is important to act as fast as possible to drain the water, remove damp items and dry out the building. It is recommended to consult a professional cleaning company registered with the Régie du bâtiment du Québec (RBQ). However, if you do the work yourself, follow these precautions:

- Start the clean up as soon as possible after the water has receded.
- Throw out wet furniture and items that can't be cleaned and dried properly: mattresses, box springs, futons, quilts, comforters, duvets, pillows, upholstered furniture, soft toys, appliances whose filters or insulation have been exposed to water (hot water tanks, fridges, freezers, dishwashers).
- Non-insulated electrical appliances can be thoroughly cleaned and reused, if they still work.
- Open the walls, and remove and throw out all wet materials and debris, including insulation, damp drywall, flooring, carpets and rugs, etc.
 - Remove all materials to at least 50 cm (20 inches) above the high-water line.
 - Structures that can't be removed must be cleaned and decontaminated, according to the materials (wood can be cleaned with a vacuum-sander, concrete surfaces with a solution of tri-sodium phosphate diluted in water, etc.).
- Clean all surfaces that have not been in direct contact with flood water.
 - Use a household cleaner (soapy water).
 - Vacuum with a HEPA vacuum cleaner.
 - After cleaning, air out and dry thoroughly.
- Clean forced-air heating systems thoroughly or replace hot air and return air ducts that have been flooded to prevent the spread of mould spores.
- Air out and dehumidify the house to dry the materials and reduce humidity.
 - Use commercial fans or dehumidifiers to dry out the house.
 - Keep relative humidity between 30% and 50%.

If mould develops despite taking these measures, do the following:

- Throw out all mouldy porous materials, even if they are no longer wet.
- Clean all hard surfaces on which there is mould (e.g.: floor, ceramic tiles, wood furniture) with water and an all-purpose detergent, then rinse and dry right away.
- Contact a professional cleaning company registered with the RBQ if mould covers a large surface or major work is needed.

Toys, utensil and food containers

- Pots and pans, lids, glasses, food containers, non-porous toys, etc. should be washed thoroughly with soap and water (more than once if they're very dirty). After washing and rinsing these articles, put them in boiling water (except glasses) for a minute, then let them air-dry.
- Throw out kitchen implements that are cracked, chipped or hard to clean.
- Clean non-porous toys with soap and water, more than once if they're very dirty.

Clothes and bedding

- Clothes, bedding and blankets that have been in contact with flood water should be machine washed in warm or hot water and detergent. Run them through two complete wash cycles.
- Scrub or use a water jet to remove dirt from machine washable clothing and let them dry outdoors, if possible.
- Soak very dirty articles overnight in clean, cold water with detergent.
- Clothing that are not machine-washable should be aired out until completely dry, then dry-cleaned by a professional.