



TYPICAL AREAS TO INVESTIGATE FOR MOLD: A BRIEF GUIDE

- **UPHOLSTERED FURNITURE**

Check cushions and underneath surfaces for musty odors or visible signs of mold



- **WOOD FURNITURE & PAPER PRODUCTS:**

Unfinished surfaces are most vulnerable. Check under chairs, inside cabinets and dressers, backs/bottoms/sides of drawers, picture frame, cardboard storage boxes in closets, attics and basements. Contaminated paper products should be placed in heavy plastic bags, sealed and removed for disposal to a sanitary landfill.

- **FINISHED WALLS:**

Are there visible signs of staining? Look for visible growth at the seams on wallpaper and at the top and bottom. Does the wallpaper feel rough as if sand is underneath? Clean off surface growth and monitor. Sub-surface growth warrants careful removal of the paper (use wet process & avoid cross contamination of other home surfaces). Do walls smell musty at the electrical outlets or switch plates? Does musty odor come out from around trim work on windows or doors?

- **CARPET:**

Have carpets been cleaned recently? Have carpets been properly dried (within 8 to 12 hours) after wet cleaning processes or spills? Are potted plants sitting on waterproof trays? Are areas next to outside walls damp from condensation (sweating) during the fall/winter/spring?

- **VACUUM CLEANERS:**

Use the highest level filtration bags that are designed for your machine. Change bags regularly. If possible, air out the house for at least 15 minutes after vacuuming. Consider installing a central vacuum system that discharges fine particulate to the building exterior.



- **DRAPERIES:**

Do fabrics smell musty or are they damp from condensation?

- **SILK PLANTS/FLOWERS/DRIED FLOWERS:**

Does the foliage, basket or Spanish Moss produce musty odors?

- **KITCHEN:**

Clean coils and evaporator pan on refrigerators bi-monthly. Are refrigerator door gaskets and interior clean? Store harsh cleaners and aerosols in a well ventilated space such as the garage. Check under sink and dishwasher for any leaks and musty odors.



- **CLOSETS:**

Are the closets musty? If so, pack clothing in bags and have them washed or dry cleaned. Clean all interior surfaces of the closet and allow to dry prior to replacing contents. If closet is normally damp then remove any carpet flooring and use only for storage of nonperishable items or items stored in plastic containers with sealed lids.

- **BATHROOMS:**

Shower curtains should be checked for mold and algae. Check the tracks, bottom frames and inside surfaces of shower doors. Wash cloth and towel bars may have hidden growth areas. Toilet tanks should have the seal checked between tank and bowl and interior and exterior surfaces. Is the exhaust fan clean with no back draft? Back draft from attics or crawl spaces can be musty. Check under sink piping, cabinet space, and hidden crevasses under handles. Is tile grout intact? Is water getting into underlying wood floor from tub, shower or toilet? Is interface joint caulked with a pliable caulk or has caulk dried and cracked?

- **LAUNDRY ROOM:**

Is the dryer vent clean and no back draft? Is dryer vented to the outside? Is area clean behind and along side washing machine and dryer?

NOTE: Never dump dryer exhaust into the home, attic or crawl space!

- **HVAC SYSTEM:**

High density filters are best. Check with your HVAC contractor for a high efficiency filter and capacity of the fan to handle the increased air flow resistance. Is the cabinet and coil clean?

Is drain pan properly trapped? (Air should not be drawn in through the trap.) Are duct joints sealed including penetrations through floors and walls from crawl, attic, and other unprotected areas? Is outside makeup air part of system design? Does the house have an exhaust-air/fresh-air heat exchange system? Is makeup air properly filtered? Is makeup air for furnace/water heater open vented into a utility closet from the attic, crawlspace or outside? Humidifiers should be of the single pass design. Units that use a float and reservoir need to be carefully cleaned once every two weeks.

- **PLUMBING:**

Do pipes sweat and drip? Is there fungus on pipes or at drip line? Are valves leaking at the stem? Any signs of leaks at tub, sink or toilet bowl gaskets?



- **CRAWL SPACE & MUSTY BASEMENTS:**

Are bottom of flooring or floor joists mildew stained or other visible growth? Dirt surfaces should be left undisturbed. Laying down visqueen slows down moisture movement but does not solve the problem of a damp crawl space. Consider installing an exhaust fan which is vented to the outside and controlled by a humidistat. Seal around all vents and plumbing that enter into the house from a crawl space or musty basement.

- **ATTICS:**

Are eve and ridge vents open to allow free flow of air? Is vent area sufficient to avoid moisture condensation or frost on roof decking?

- **EXHAUST FANS:**

Are fans and vents exhausted to building exterior and not dumped into crawl space or attic? Are exhaust fans used in high moisture areas such as bathrooms and kitchens?

- **BASEMENTS:**

Check floor drains and fill traps with water. This will prevent venting of sewer gasses into the home. Moisture moving through walls should be investigated and stopped. White powder at areas of water movement is usually efflorescence (calcium salt crystals) and not mold.

NOTE: Consider using dehumidifiers to help remove moisture, especially in high-moisture areas with poor air circulation. Condensing coils should be checked regularly for signs of mildew and cleaned.

If the outside air is dry, there is not dust, and a low spore count, consider venting the house with outside air. Harvest time has a tendency to elevate airborne quantities of soil colonizing fungi.

A simple cleaning solution of 10% bleach in water, mixed and used as per label instructions can be used to clean hard surfaces. Allow a final application of the solution to air dry after cleaning of the surface. **DO NOT DIP USED WIPES INTO YOUR CLEANING SOLUTION** as it will be quickly neutralized by the introduced grime. Use only fresh or well rinsed wipes or mist the solution onto the target surface.

This guide is not a replacement for an experienced investigator!



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