

Avoiding Mold Problems

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Introduction

Molds are a type of fungus and their tiny spores of mold are found in the air everywhere, both indoors and outdoors. The spores act like seeds, forming new mold colonies when they find the right conditions. A moist environment and food sources like cellulose provide conditions that foster mold growth.

Mold grows best at 66 - 86 degree Fahrenheit and a relative humidity levels above 60%. These conditions describe a typical Florida day; so it can be a challenge to keep mold out of your home.

Avoid Mold Problems

- Use air conditioning during humid periods. Set your air conditioning thermostat to “auto” to prevent circulation of humid air. Inspect your air conditioning filter regularly. Seal air conditioning ducts with mastic to prevent leaks. If you have a central air conditioning system and need a dehumidifier to reduce relative humidity below 60%, you should have your air conditioning system checked for problems.
- Keep moist air out of the house. Keep windows closed when outdoor humidity levels are high. Properly seal windows and doors. Check window frames regularly for condensation and wiped off as needed.
- Kitchen and bathroom exhaust fans should vent to the outside. Use bathroom exhaust only long enough to remove moisture.
- Repair water leaks within 24 hours. Waiting can lead to serious mold problems.
- Keep moisture away from your house. Direct sprinkler heads away from your house. Keep foliage, dead leaves, and mulch at least a foot from the house.
- Don't put sweaty clothes back into closets. The small amount of moisture they hold will make your closet smell stale and musty.
- Let sweaty shoes dry. Once shoes have been worn, they are “conditioned” to grow mildew. A little perspiration plus the composition of leather in shoes or belts is yummy for mildew.

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- Clean bathrooms regularly. By the time mildew is visible it has produced enough spores to contaminate the air in your whole house. Your air conditioner will transplant spores to other areas of the house.
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- Protect your home when you are away. Learn how to protect your home before you leave for the summer or vacation. Read the publication [How to Close Your Home](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/HE887) which is available at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/HE887>

Should you test for mold?

It is usually not a good idea to test for mold. Remember, a mold problem is really a moisture problem. Spend your money and resources finding out why moisture levels are high and cleaning up the mold. Excessive moisture can be the result of a leak or high levels of moisture in the air inside the home.

Hiring a Professional

You may want to hire a professional, if you have an extensive mold problem. Shop carefully. There are no Florida state government standards for mold remediation work.

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