



OESH Mould Procedures for WRHA Community Health Services

Mould/Mildew in Client's Homes for WRHA Staff

In this document, the term mould will be used to mean any of mould (mold), mildew, yeasts, and fungi.

How do I recognize mould and mildew?

Mould can appear as discolouration on walls or ceilings and often appears as fuzzy black or green surface growth, but there are hundreds of species and many other colours. It only takes 48 hours for mould to appear on damp materials.

Mildew usually grows in a flat pattern and may appear either powdery or downy, thriving on warm and damp surfaces. Powdery mildew usually starts out white and may later turn yellow, brown, or black. Downy mildew usually starts out yellow and later turns brown.

What is Mould?

Moulds and fungi are found in nature and are necessary for the breakdown of leaves, wood and other plant debris. These micro-organisms can enter a building directly or by their spores being carried in by the air. In a home or building, moulds and fungi are usually found growing on wood, drywall (plaster/gypsum/Sheetrock®, upholstery, fabric, wallpaper, drapery, ceiling tiles, and carpeting).

The key factor is moisture because moulds and fungi need it to grow. As a result, moulds and fungi are most often found in basements, kitchens and bathrooms.

In modern buildings, moisture may be present as the result of flooding, leaks in the roof/basement or plumbing, sealed buildings that do not allow excess moisture to escape, sources such as cooking facilities, showers, bathtubs, etc. or excess humidity.

What are the symptoms of mould exposure?

The presence of mould does not always mean that health problems will occur. However, for some people, the inhalation of the mould, fragments of the moulds, or spores can lead to health problems or make certain health conditions worse. The mould must be airborne in order to be inhaled.

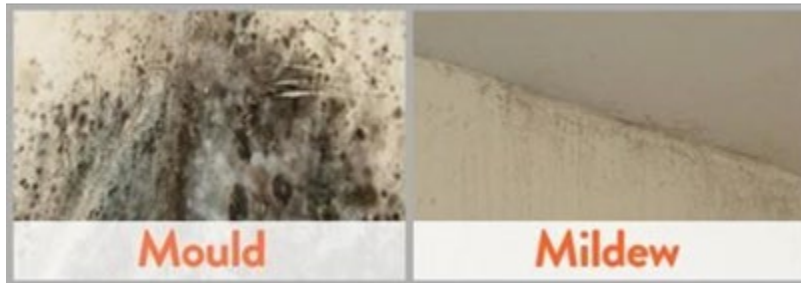
In general, the most commonly reported symptoms include:

- Eye, nose, and throat irritation.
- Cough or congestion.
- Aggravation of asthma.
- Fatigue.
- Headaches.
- Difficulty concentrating.



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Moulds can also exacerbate (make worse) the symptoms of allergies including wheezing, chest tightness, shortness of breath as well as nasal congestion and eye irritation. People who are immuno-suppressed or recovering from surgery are usually more susceptible to health problems from moulds.



**What should I do if I think there is mould in a client's home?
DO NOT ATTEMPT TO CLEAN THE MOULD YOURSELF.**

Notify your supervisor who will investigate which will include determining the size or extent of the area. Consult with the OESH Safety Specialist if required.

HEALTH CANADA DOES NOT RECOMMEND TESTING THE AIR FOR MOULD.

Health Canada, in accordance with other public health organizations, does not recommend testing the air for mould. An air test does not provide information on health and does not address the cause of mould damage in the house. You also do not need to know the type of mould present in order to remove it. Mould is a natural part of the environment and there are always mould spores in the air. Simply finding mould spores in an air test does not necessarily mean there is a problem.

The investigation may result in an updated Safety Assessment Form Tool (SAFT) and Safe Visit Plan (SVP). In some cases, Personal Protective Equipment may be issued.

Until the mould has been remediated, evaluations (by Case Coordinator and/or OESH) will need to be performed to ensure the safety of worker/s.

If you have been experiencing health issues you will be referred to the WRHA OESH Occupational Health Nurse who may request medical documentation from your healthcare provider.

The extent of mould growth

It is important to determine the extent of the mould problem in a home. An area of mould is considered **small** if it covers one square meter or less. There should be no more than three patches of mould, with the total area staying within one square meter. Many small patches of mould in one area or throughout your home are a sign of moisture problems that need to be



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investigated and corrected right away. **If ignored, small mould areas may become larger over time.**

The area of mould is considered **medium** if there are more than three patches of mould (each patch smaller than a square meter), but the total area is less than three square meters. In this case, assessment by a qualified professional is recommended but, in most cases, a medium amount of mould may be cleaned up using proper procedures and protective equipment. An area of mould is considered **large** if a single patch of mould is larger than three square meters.

Health Canada does not recommend that an UNQUALIFIED person clean up large areas of Mould!

You will need a professional assessment to determine why the mould is there in the first place and how to clean it up.

Table 1: Extent of Mould

		
Three or fewer patches and the total area is less than 1 m ²	If there are more than 3 patches or if the patches are greater than 1 m ² but less than 3 m ²	If a single patch is larger than 3 m ²
Small mould area: Clean-up using proper precautions recommended by Health Canada guidelines	Medium mould area: Expert assessment recommended, but may be cleaned up using proper precautions, again following Health Canada guidelines	Large mould area: Expert assessment and clean-up recommended!
Homeowner Responsibility	Homeowner Responsibility	Homeowner Responsibility

References:

- [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](#)
- [Province of Manitoba Fact Sheet](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)