



HOUSING AUTHORITY  
OF  
THURSTON COUNTY

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## Mold & Mildew

### Interior Air Quality

Although technically not the same, conditions of mold and mildew are similar and may be treated in the same ways. A build up of mold and mildew within a living space is cause for concern and should be addressed immediately. It influences the quality of air in the living environment and can damage personal property. If left unchecked it may even affect the structure of the home. Some people are sensitive to airborne mold and mildew spores to the extent that they may affect personal health by stimulating allergic responses or other bodily defensive mechanisms.

Molds and mildew typically thrive in dark damp environments where there is restricted air movement. The resulting black, brown or gray spots or fuzzy growth discolors walls, windows, sills, and carpets. Airborne fungi cause a noticeable odor that is sometimes described as “musty”.

Our current HQS standard for mold and mildew states that affected areas in excess of two (2) contiguous square foot surface will be considered a fail condition. Because this condition develops in areas that are dark and provide adequate moisture, both housekeeping and structural problems can jointly or severely cause or perpetuate problems.

**Moisture control:** There are many possible sources of moisture with in a dwelling unit. Here are a few places to start looking:

- Crawl spaces under houses should have adequate vapor barriers and adequate foundation venting. Conditions causing ponding water in basements or crawl spaces should be corrected immediately.
- Roofs should be in good condition including all valleys, hips, and flashing around vents and chimneys.
- Gutters, down spouts and curtain drains should be in good operating condition.
- Vegetation should not be growing up against the building. Northern walls of buildings are the most susceptible as they receive the least sunlight during the day. It is more important to ensure weather tightness and limited vegetation along these walls.
- There should not be any earth to wood contact around or under the house.
- All doors and windows, siding and vents and attics should be in good condition and well caulked to insure weather tightness.
- Make sure that clothes dryers venting as well as bathroom and kitchen venting are properly exhausted to the exterior and not into the attics or crawl spaces.

- Make sure all water piping, exterior hose bibs, and other plumbing and fixtures are in leak free condition.
- Sump pumps and floor drains should be in good operating condition.

Controlling the growth of fungi is important for the health of a home. Once established, mold and mildew can be very difficult to control or eliminate. Step one in getting rid of a mold problem that's setting the stage for its growth. This is key. You can scrub, dispose of and replace moldy materials but until you fix the underlying problem, mold will keep returning.

Once the moisture problems are fixed, get rid of the moldy materials carefully. Rough handling of damaged materials will not only stir up spores and spread them even farther around your house but also launch millions of spores into the air, where you inhale them.

Here are some housekeeping tips to control Mold:

- **Adequate heat:** Cool damp areas of a house will be first to develop a problem. Try to ensure that all living spaces in the house are heated to at least 60 degrees F from October thru April. This is the most active time for indoor fungi.
- **Filtered air:** If mold or mildew has affected your unit, you may want to filter the indoor air using a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filtration system. These air filtration systems will remove most of the small airborne particulates that may cause allergic responses in sensitive persons.
- **Air movement and ventilation:** If a home does not have forced air heating, small fans placed in problem rooms will keep air in motion. Open curtains during the day to allow air movement around windows. Set up fans to ensure carpets are dried thoroughly after cleaning. Use ventilation fans in bathrooms and laundry areas to remove moisture laden air.
- **Personal Property:** Excessive furniture, boxes. Stacks of bedding or clothing etc. will inhibit air movement. Keep rooms as neat and tidy as possible and keep furniture at least 3 to 4 inches out from walls.
- **Cleaning:** Good house keeping is essential. Especially in homes that are more susceptible to mold growth. Mold is often controllable with basic simple cleaning but if mold is persistent a solution of bleach and water will help kill it and minimize its return. Use ¼ cup bleach to a gallon of water being careful not to get the solution on unaffected carpets, drapery and wallpaper causing discoloration. There are also other cleaner/retardant products available in retail markets so check with your local hardware store.
- **Remove affected items:** If possible, remove and replace items that are affected by mold and mildew such as shower curtains, throw rugs, old magazines and books, etc.
- **Windows:** Many windows sweat (from condensation), especially during the wet season. Control build up of moisture around windows and make sure drain holes are clear to carry away moisture. This will prevent moisture from getting into the walls below the windows.
- **Repainting:** Remove surface mildew by scrubbing the area with a ½ percent bleach solution. When the area is dry, prime it with alcohol-based, white pigment shellac, such as Zinsser Bullseye, and use a paint containing mildewcide.

Areas that are larger than two square feet should be treated by a professional in mold remediation.