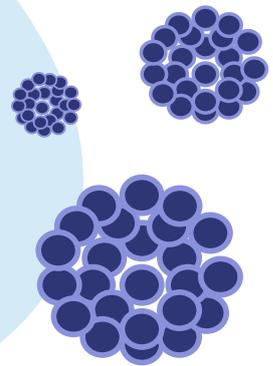


# Mould: What You Need to Know

## What is Mould?

Mould is everywhere. It's a naturally occurring organism that plays an important role in nature's ecosystem. Low levels of mould can virtually be found everywhere, even in the most sterile rooms. It can vary greatly in where it grows and its appearance, coming in all shapes and colours. Mould is often initially identified by its smell as it often gives off a musty odour or an earthy smell.



## Is Mould Harmful?

Mould affects people differently depending on their health and the type of mould. It most commonly causes nasal and sinus congestion, sore throats, headaches, eye irritations, body rashes, and other aches and pains. Other more severe health effects can be caused, but are uncommon. Individuals with pre-existing health conditions can be more susceptible to mould. Mould can also cause damage to the buildings and surfaces it inhabits.

## Identifying Mould in the Workplace

Mould may grow indoors in wet or moist areas lacking adequate ventilation, including walls/ wallpaper, ceilings, bathroom tiles, carpets, insulation material and wood. If moisture accumulates in a building, mould growth will often occur. Generally, there are two simple ways to identify the presence of mould:

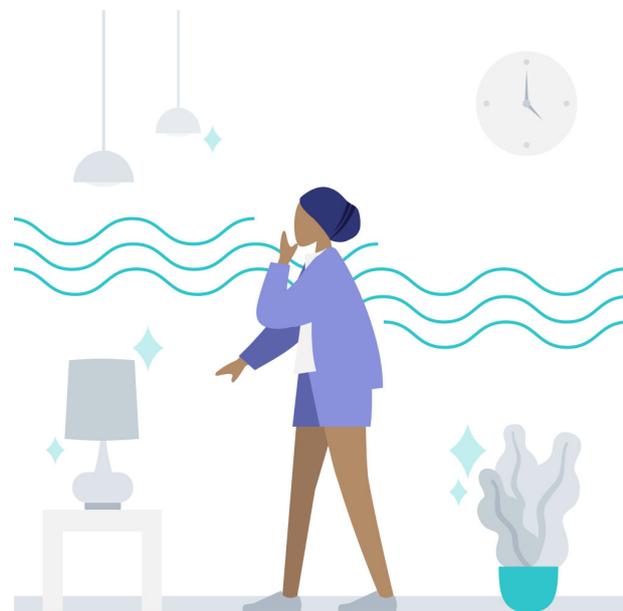
**Sight:** Lookout for woolly patches or mats on surfaces. The colour will vary, but commonly mould is green, white and black.

**Smell:** Mould is usually identified by a musty odour or an earthy smell.

As mould is microscopic, contamination may be far more widespread than what can be seen visually. It is recommended that sampling and assessment be conducted by a suitably qualified professional such as an Occupational Hygienist.

## Preventing Mould Growth

Unfortunately, it's not possible to completely eliminate mould spores in the indoor environment. However, the key to preventing mould growth in the workplace is to control excess moisture, reduce dampness, and ensure the building has good ventilation to control humidity.



## Eliminating Mould

Once significant contamination is present, mould growth is very obvious. In mild cases (i.e. contamination that is covering less than 1m<sup>2</sup>), mould growth may be addressed without professional assistance. However, it's important to identify and remove any sources of moisture/water to ensure the mould is unable to re-grow.

Considerations for removal:

- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, goggles or a respirator.
- Restrict access to the area while the mould is being removed.
- Avoid using regular cleaning chemicals, such as bleach, as they're ineffective against mould.
- Make sure all contaminated cleaning items are disposed of correctly.

More severe cases of contamination require professional removal and treatment by a mould removal specialist or by a mould removal specialist ie. IICRC or RIA competent persons.

## What Happens Next

Exposure to mould has the potential to cause a range of health effects. However, by taking precautionary actions to prevent mould growth and by identifying mould at the earliest opportunity, we can reduce the risk of worker exposure, prevent damage to buildings, and reduce the costs associated with removal and remediation.

## Summary

Exposure to mould has the potential to cause a range of health effects. However, by taking precautionary actions to prevent mould growth and by identifying mould at the earliest opportunity, we can reduce the risk of worker exposure, prevent damage to buildings, and reduce the costs associated with removal and remediation.

## More Information

For more information or advice around managing mould please contact GCG on 1300 424 474 or via [info@gcg.net.au](mailto:info@gcg.net.au).

GCG's occupational hygiene consultants are professionals in the industry who are certified with the Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists (AIOH).

