

Finding Mold

Inspection and Testing for Buildings

DIY Visual Inspection for Mold

- It is safe to do a preliminary search for water damage at your home or office.
 - If it is possible that you are sick from mold exposure, be careful to avoid disturbing mold or going into obviously moldy areas. Leave this to the professionals.
- Look for any signs of water damage
- Pay attention to any areas that smell musty
- Pay attention to carpets that have gotten wet (floods, etc); mold can live in the carpet pad
- Consider places where water could enter enclosed / hidden spaces:
 - Under sinks
 - Behind or under washing machines, dish washers, refrigerators, hot water heater
 - Showers: cracks in grout allow water behind walls / tiles - suspect if mold re-grows quickly after cleaning grout, or if tiles or fixtures are loose, or wall behind tile is soft.
 - Eaves of house, areas around gutters, windows that might have lost their seal or show condensation when it is wet outside
 - Closets that share a wall with plumbing
 - Look for soft walls, loose tiles, etc
 - Basements and crawl spaces
 - Air ducts / HVAC system
- DO NOT disturb visible mold if you find it. Disturbing a mold colony will trigger a release of mold fragments and mycotoxins, making your environment more toxic.

Remember:

- Most mold / water damage is in places that you can't see. Visible mold in a cabinet or on a wall is just the tip of the iceberg.
- If you can see mold on a wall or floor then there is always more mold inside the wall/ floor where there is less air circulation and more opportunity for moisture to linger.

DIY Testing (You can do this before calling a professional mold inspector)

- ERMI Test and / or EMMA test
 - See your treatment plan or my website for links to labs
- Tape lift, Swab or Bulk Samples can be done for any materials that are visibly moldy
 - See your treatment plan or my website for links to labs

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Professional Inspectors

If it seems likely that there is mold in your home AND we have decided that it is likely the cause of your illness, then it is time to call in the professionals.

If you are already sick from mold exposure, do NOT try to do further inspection or remediation yourself. You will get much sicker and it will take much longer to heal.

First: your mold inspector and the remediation company should NOT be the same.

Second: Nothing is more important than finding a good inspector. DO NOT skip this step. It is so, so tempting to call the first remediation company you find and have them get started. Resist the urge. A good, experienced inspector that understands the health implications of mold exposure is worth EVERY PENNY. They can save you thousands of dollars and months of time by making sure remediation is done right the first time (nothing extra and nothing missed). Imagine taking all the time and energy to pack up your stuff, finding a safe place to stay, spending weeks to months on healing your body, only to discover that after the remediation there is still mold in your home and you have to start all over. I have seen this happen many times. Take the time to find a good inspector. Make calls, ask questions, interview multiple firms, get referrals. Nothing is more important to your healing process than finding a good inspector.

A good professional inspector will be able to

- 1) Identify mold in inaccessible areas (crawl space, inside walls)
- 2) Identify the sources of moisture and what needs to be done to fix those
- 3) Formulate a remediation plan that will be followed by the remediation company
- 4) Advocate for you with insurance companies, landlords and if necessary, in legal cases
- 5) Identify other problems with your home that may have health or safety implications
 - a. Most good mold inspectors are also good general home inspectors
- 6) Perform a post-inspection (don't let the remediation company do this) to confirm the remediation is complete

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Inspector Qualifications

Good inspectors will usually have one or more of these qualifications:

- Certification
 - BBEC (Building Biology Institute)
 - ACAC certified (American Council for Accredited Certification) they issue
 - CRMI (Residential Mold Inspector) certification
 - CMR: Mold Remediator Certification
 - IICRC certified (Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification)
 - They issue a lot of smaller certifications in a wide variety of niche building issues like flooring inspection, structural drying, etc
- Licensing
 - Many states require licensing for mold inspectors and remediators, setting educational requirements and other certification requirements
 - In Texas you have to have a fair amount of college level sciences, plus be an Industrial Hygienist, professional engineer, professional registered sanitarian, certified safety professional, or registered architect.

Please see the handout “How to Find a Qualified Mold Inspector” and let that guide your search.

Let your inspector help you find the right remediation company. Also see the handout “How to Find a Qualified Remediator”

These are the top inspectors in the US, both are familiar with the extra care needed for people with mold illness. Neither are based in Texas, but then can help you with referrals.

- <https://yesweinspect.com/>
- <http://www.themoldguyinc.com>

Real Time Labs is one of the top labs in the country offering testing for people with mold illness. They may also be able to recommend inspectors, remediators, and even legal help in your area.

- <https://realtimelab.com/rtl-certified-mycotoxin-environmental-specialists/>