Daily Maintenance Reminder

RE: Surface growing mold and mildew

Every year with the onset of Fall, we experience difficulties in our residences with mold and mildew growing on walls, window frames, etc. In an effort to deal with this annual affliction, we are compiling this guide to help residents understand and control this problem. Below, you will find an explanation of mildew and some of its causes as well as tips for control and cleaning. It is important to realize that mold is a common organism and exists virtually everywhere. It cannot be wiped out completely but it can be controlled. We hope that this will help alleviate concerns regarding the growth of mildew in the colder months as well as give you the tools needed to handle any mildew that you find growing in your home.

What it mildew?
Mildew is a mold spore that grows on organic material such as paper, wood, glue, or paint.

Certain factors are necessary for mildew to grow and unfortunately in the Pacific Northwest, we most often experience these conditions in winter months. High humidity (above 60%) and warm temperatures provide the environment that will allow mold and mildew to survive.

- Mildew grows anywhere that has a high moisture level.
- This can include bathrooms, kitchens, laundry rooms, or on surfaces like windowsills that are damp from sweating windows.
- Even a slight coating of dirt or food allows mildew to feed on organic material.
- Optimal growth environments include humidity over 60% and temperatures between 75 and 90 degrees.
- In our region, mildew can often be seen on windowsills and the seals of windows.

What can we do?
It is important to realize that mildew exists everywhere, there is no way to eliminate all spores indoors. The key is to eliminate the environment in which they can grow.

- The first step is to eliminate as much moisture as possible.
- A family of four produces 6 pints of moisture in a 12 hour period simply by breathing.
- Showering and cooking add to the moisture level.
- Outdoor and indoor temperature variations cause this moisture to condense leaving moisture on surfaces throughout the house.
- To control moisture throughout the day, use fans when showering or cooking.
- Wipe down windows and windowsills when moisture appears.
- Make sure that warm air flows into all areas of the home. Move large objects a few inches away from the inside of exterior walls to increase air circulation.
- Vacuum and clean your home regularly to remove mold spores.
- Clean the surface. After wiping up moisture, clean the surface to remove any mildew spores, living or dead.
- With a mild detergent solution such as laundry detergent and warm water
  - Let dry
- Follow up with a solution of bleach and water (1/4 cup bleach to 1 quart water)
  - Let dry
- Follow up with a solution of bleach and water (1/4 cup bleach to 1 quart water)
  - Let dry

By being aware of the potential for mildew growth and taking some simple housekeeping steps to eliminate an environment in which it can grow, you can effectively limit mildew growth in your residence. Remember, mildew is as common as the air we breathe and will continue to land on surfaces, both indoors and out. The key is to take some steps to eliminate an ideal growing environment and immediately cleaning any mildew that is found growing on a surface. The biggest step you can take is to limit moisture in your home, do this by using fans and wiping down damp surfaces such as counter tops, windows, and window sills when they get damp.

Also, if you suspect that you have a water or roof leak, be sure to notify the maintenance department immediately. Dripping pipes and leaking roofs can lead to moisture inside the walls where it cannot be seen. This needs to be addressed before mildew can get started. If you see stains appearing on walls or ceilings, you may have a water leak. Let us know immediately.

Thank you for your help.

Northwest University Maintenance

Sources:
- Washington State Department of Health: [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/IAQ/Got_Mold.html](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/IAQ/Got_Mold.html)
- University of Florida, IFAS Extension: [https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/HE633](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/HE633)
- Minnesota Department of Health: [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/mold.htm](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/mold.htm)