



Preventing Surface Mold and Mildew

Every year when autumn begins, we experience difficulties in our campus residences with controlling mold and mildew. In an effort to help combat this, we have compiled this guide to help residents understand and control this problem. It is important to realize that mildew is a common organism and exists virtually everywhere. While it can't be wiped out permanently, it can be easily managed! Use these tools to handle any mildew you find in your home.

What is mildew?

- Mildew is a mold spore that grows on organic materials such as paper, wood, glue, or paint.
- Certain factors are necessary for mildew to grow, and the Pacific Northwest climate lends itself to these conditions in the winter months.
 - High humidity (above 60%) and warm indoor temperatures provide the environment for mold and mildew to survive.
- Mildew grows anywhere that has a high moisture level.
 - Bathrooms, kitchens, laundry rooms, or on damp surfaces like windowsills
 - Even a slight coating or dirt or food can allow mildew to grow
 - Humidity over 60% and temperatures between 75 and 90 degrees create optimal growth environments.
- Mildew often grows on windowsills and seals of windows in our region.
 - When the temperature outside drops and the temperature inside rises, the humidity increases. Condensation on the window provides an ideal environment for mildew.

What can we do to prevent it?

The key is eliminating the environment in which mildew can grow; there is no way to eliminate all spores indoors.

1. **Eliminate** as much moisture as possible.
 - Did you know... a family of four produces six pints of moisture in a 12 hour period simply by breathing?
 - Showering and cooking add to the moisture level.
 - Use fans when showering and cooking.
 - Wipe down windows and windowsills when moisture appears.
 - Move large objects a few inches away from the inside of exterior walls to increase air circulation.
2. **Clean** mildew surfaces to remove any spores.
 - Wash with a mild detergent solution such as laundry detergent and warm water, and let dry.
 - Follow up with a solution of bleach and water (1/4 cup of bleach to one quart of water), and let dry.

By being aware of the potential for mildew growth and taking these simple housekeeping steps to eliminate an environment where it can grow, you can effectively limit mildew growth in your residence.

See stains appearing on walls or ceilings? If you suspect that you have a water or roof leak, be sure to notify Maintenance immediately. Dripping pipes and leaking roofs can lead to moisture inside the walls. This needs to be addressed before mold can grow.

Sources:

Washington State Department of Health: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/HealthyHome/Contaminants/Mold>
University of Florida: <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/IR00005806/00001>
Minnesota Department of Health: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/mold/>