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Keeping It Clean: Controlling Mildew[1]

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Figure 1.
Credit: jarih via iStock

Mildew is a mold that can grow and cause damage to your health and home. The concern about mildew is that it is believed to contribute to respiratory problems, such as asthma—especially in children.

- Mildew is recognizable by its musty odor and black, brownish, or reddish fuzzy discoloration.
- Mildew grows best in moist, warm air, such as in Florida.
- It grows well on damp clothing, in bathrooms, and other places where there is moisture.

How to Keep Mildew from Growing

- Clean showers/tubs regularly so mildew cannot grow on soap scum and moisture.
- Dry/squeegee off the shower walls after using the shower so water will not cling to the walls.
- Hang damp towels where air will circulate so that they will dry more quickly.
- Do not leave damp or wet clothes lying around, and make certain they are dry before putting them in the dirty clothes hamper.
- Cut the hem off of the plastic shower curtain so drops of water will drip off. After showering, stretch the shower curtain out along the entire length of the shower rod so it will dry instead of sticking together.
- Open closet doors so air will circulate, and use caution not to store/hang sweaty garments in the closet.
- Remove food stains from furniture as quickly as possible.
- Use ventilation fans to draw moist air out of the home, especially when showering and cooking.
- Use ceiling fans to circulate air in the home when people and animals are present in the rooms.
- Keep shoes dry and clean.

If You Have Mildew, Look for Ways to Get Rid of it

- For clothes that have mildew stains on them:
  - use 2 tablespoons of liquid chlorine bleach mixed with 1 quart of water
  - sponge or soak them for 5 to 15 minutes, and then rinse them
  - for a full washer of clothes, add 1 cup of chlorine bleach in the wash water
- For clothing that chlorine bleach will damage, use non-chlorine bleach, soak the garment(s) for 30 minutes or longer, and then rinse them.
- Clean the shower with chlorine bleach. (Open the window for ventilation when using chlorine bleach. Do not mix chlorine bleach with any other cleaning product. Wear a face mask while cleaning.)
- Place musty bedding in the sunshine for several hours. If mildew remains, sponge with a cloth moistened with 1 cup of rubbing alcohol and 1 cup of water, and dry thoroughly (by using a ceiling fan if available).

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