

Red Mold Cleanup Decision Checklist

A practical quick-reference for deciding what you can clean, what needs more caution, and when to bring in a qualified mold professional.

Quick rule: Color alone cannot identify a mold species or tell you how harmful it is. Focus on the material, the size of the affected area, the moisture source, and the cleanup method.

1. Is this a reasonable DIY cleanup?

- The visible area is roughly 10 square feet or less.
- The growth is on a hard, nonporous or otherwise cleanable surface.
- The problem is not caused by sewage or other contaminated water.
- You do not suspect mold inside HVAC equipment, walls, ceilings, insulation, or other hidden spaces.
- No one doing the cleanup has a health concern that makes mold exposure especially risky.

If you cannot check these boxes confidently, skip the DIY route and get qualified help.

2. Small-area cleanup steps

- 1 Fix the moisture source first.**
Repair leaks, reduce condensation, improve ventilation, or correct the water problem before cleanup.
- 2 Protect yourself.**
Use gloves and eye protection. An N95 can help reduce inhalation of airborne particles during cleanup.
- 3 Clean hard surfaces with detergent and water.**
Scrub visible growth from compatible hard surfaces, then rinse if the material and product instructions call for it.
- 4 Dry completely.**
Use towels, ventilation, fans, or a dehumidifier as appropriate so the surface does not stay damp.
- 5 Use stronger products only when needed.**
Check the surface manufacturer's care instructions and the cleaner label. Use one cleaner at a time and never mix products.

Safer product-switching rule: If you switch products, wipe or rinse away residue when the surface and label allow it, let the area dry fully, then decide whether another product is actually needed. Never layer wet cleaners directly on top of each other.

3. Material check: clean or replace?

Material	General approach
Tile, glass, sealed hard surfaces	Often cleanable with detergent and water, followed by complete drying. Confirm the surface tolerates the method.
Grout or textured mineral surfaces	May require more physical cleaning. Avoid assuming every chemical is safe for every grout, stone, or finish.
Drywall, ceiling tile, carpet, insulation	Porous materials can hold growth below the surface and may need removal or professional remediation.
HVAC or hidden building cavities	Do not treat as ordinary surface cleaning. Get appropriate professional evaluation and remediation help.

4. Call a qualified mold professional when:

■	The affected area is larger than about 10 square feet or there is extensive water damage.
■	Growth keeps returning after cleaning and moisture control.
■	Mold may be hidden behind walls, under flooring, in insulation, or in HVAC equipment.
■	Porous building materials are heavily affected or cannot be cleaned completely.
■	The problem involves sewage or other contaminated water.
■	You have health concerns about mold exposure. A healthcare professional can advise on personal medical risk.

5. Prevention check

■	Fix leaks and water intrusion promptly.
■	Dry wet materials as quickly as possible, ideally within 24-48 hours.
■	Use bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans or other ventilation where appropriate.
■	Keep indoor humidity below 60%, ideally around 30-50% when practical.
■	Clean and dry mold-prone surfaces before buildup becomes extensive.

Sources and limits

- U.S. EPA, A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture and Your Home: <https://www.epa.gov/mold/brief-guide-mold-moisture-and-your-home>
- U.S. EPA, Mold Information Slideshow: <https://www.epa.gov/mold/mold-information-slideshow>
- CDC, Mold: <https://www.cdc.gov/mold-health/about/>
- CDC, Clinical Guidance for Asthma, Other Respiratory Conditions, and/or Mold Allergy: <https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/hcp/clinical-guidance/index.html>

This checklist is general household guidance. It does not identify mold species, diagnose health conditions, or replace product instructions or advice from a healthcare professional or qualified mold-remediation specialist.