Mold in Your Home: Testing, Inspection and Removal

A guide for Alton and Metro East homeowners

GATEWAY WATER & MOLD

Mold in Your Home: Testing, Inspection and Removal for Alton and Metro East Homeowners

A stain on a wall or a musty smell in a basement raises one question first: is it actually mold, and how much work does it need? This guide explains how that question gets answered, what an inspection covers, and what remediation involves. It is general guidance. The right scope for any property depends on what is found on site.

Start with the question: is it mold at all?

Not every dark patch is active mold. Gateway's mold remediation page describes three different situations that can look alike:

- **Surface staining.** Mineral residue from years of dampness, soap scum near a utility sink, or old biological staining that is no longer alive. It may not need remediation, but it does need an honest answer.
- **Active growth.** Living colonies, usually fuzzy or velvety, often with an odor.
- **Hidden growth.** Mold behind drywall, in ductwork or in ceiling cavities, often found by smell or during other work.

Gateway's article on mold inspection versus mold testing explains the difference between looking and sampling.



Watch: How do you test for mold in a house? | St. Louis Water & Mold Answers

What a mold inspection covers

According to Gateway's mold inspection page, an assessment looks at visible conditions, moisture and the affected materials. It can include:

- Moisture readings to locate the water source, not just the stain
- A walk of the places growth hides: behind drywall, in ducts, in ceiling cavities
- Air sampling in the affected area plus an outdoor sample for context
- Surface sampling on visible growth, by tape lift or swab

Gateway collects the samples and an independent laboratory analyses them. Sampling is not automatic. Gateway first works out whether a sample would actually help set the scope.

When an inspection is worth doing

- A musty smell that has lasted for weeks
- A past leak or flood that was dried late
- Visible growth and no clear idea how far it goes
- A home purchase under contract, where findings are needed before a deadline
- A home inspector, landlord or insurance adjuster has asked for findings on file

Buyers can also read Gateway's list of mold warning signs before buying a home.



Watch: What time of year is worst for mold in St. Louis? | St. Louis Water & Mold Answers

Common misconception: "A high spore count means the house is unsafe"

A high indoor count on its own means very little. Spores are outdoors too, and the numbers move with the season and the weather. An outdoor sample gives an indoor result some context, but reading the two together still depends on how the sampling was designed and what the inspection found. A comparison alone does not set a universal safe level, and a laboratory result alone does not prove a space is free of mold.

Ask what the report will include and how its limits will be explained.

How remediation works

Remediation starts with the water, not the stain. If the moisture source is not corrected, growth can return. After that, the work follows a defined scope. For active growth, Gateway's site describes containment with plastic sheeting, HEPA-filtered negative air, removal of affected material, and antimicrobial treatment.

For basements that took water, the remediation is tied to the drying work. Materials such as drywall, trim, carpet pad and stored contents that stayed wet for more than 24 to 48 hours are the usual concern. Gateway's article on mold removal versus remediation covers the difference in terms.



Watch: How should mold be remediated? | St. Louis Water & Mold Answers

Questions to ask any mold company

- Who collects the samples, and which laboratory analyses them?
- What is the moisture source, and how will it be corrected?
- What exactly is in the written scope, and what is left alone?
- Are laboratory fees included in the sampling quote?
- Is remediation quoted separately from the inspection?
- Can an independent inspector do the assessment after the work?

At Gateway, sampling and remediation are quoted separately and in writing, and an independent post-remediation assessment can be arranged on request.

Mold and insurance

Whether a policy covers mold depends on the policy and on what caused the moisture. Gateway's article does homeowners insurance cover mold walks through the usual questions. The insurer decides coverage.



Watch: Will insurance pay for a mold test? | St. Louis Water & Mold Answers

Terms to know

- **Control sample:** an outdoor air sample taken for comparison with the indoor one.
- **Containment:** plastic barriers that keep disturbed spores inside the work area.
- **Negative air:** HEPA-filtered equipment that pulls air out of the contained area so it does not drift into the rest of the home.
- **Tape lift:** a surface sample taken by pressing clear tape onto visible growth.

More from Gateway Water & Mold

For homes in Alton, see mold remediation in Alton, IL. The phone line is (314) 947-3419. More short answers are on the Gateway Water & Mold YouTube channel.

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Water damage restoration and mold remediation

(314) 947-3419

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