

Mold in Cold Rooms

For mold to grow, it needs a surface, or substrate, to settle on, a nutritional source, and available moisture and humidity. Mold growth can occur in cold rooms due to the presence of these factors combined with limited ventilation, and the use of porous materials such as wood or cardboard.

Ways to prevent mold growth:

It is best practice for labs to clean their cold room monthly, or as often as necessary. For shared spaces, please coordinate with any co-owner. During these routine cleanings perform a quick inspection of the space for mold or other housekeeping issues. Promptly report water intrusion events (i.e. active leaks, staining on a ceiling tile, water in the HVAC drip pans, or splashing around the drain lines), and damage to door latches and gaskets to Facilities Management.



On metal surfaces, mold can be hard to see. It can manifest as a white, powder-like dusting

- Ensure surfaces are clean and promptly clean up any spilled liquids.
- Keep the door firmly shut to prevent condensation. Doors that are left open may increase the relative humidity in the room, promoting mold growth.
- Remove cardboard and other porous materials from the space. Research samples and supplies should be stored directly on shelves in plastic boxes or metal containers.

Managing Mold:

Small amounts of mold growth or minimal moisture accumulation can be easily cleaned by cold room users. The below method can be used for all surfaces, however, after treating metal surfaces they should be wiped with 70% ethanol to prevent corrosion.

- 1) Wear disposable gloves and safety glasses to spot clean
- 2) Prepare a 1:10 diluted mix of household bleach and water into a pump sprayer.
- 3) Spray the affected area and let sit for 15 minutes.
- 4) Wipe down the area (if metal, wipe with 70% ethanol).
- 5) Bag and dispose of clean-up materials as general waste.
- 6) Let dry.

Fun FAQ!

Mold comes in a variety of colors such as green, blue, orange, white and pink-ish. Each color usually means a different kind of mold.

For unmanageable amounts of mold growth, please contact EH&S.

Have more questions? Reach out to EH&S at Labsafety@columbia.edu or give us a call

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