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Mold or Mascara?

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Some molds, like the one pictured here, can be toxic.

It's a homeowner's nightmare...black mold infesting walls, carpet and ceilings.

Some molds are toxic and could make your family very sick. But can homeowners always rely on the companies who say they can remove mold?

To find out, INSIDE EDITION decided to do a test.

First, INSIDE EDITION asked two certified mold inspectors, Robert Weitz and Charles Schwartz, to check out the kitchen and bathroom in a suburban New York home. After performing several tests, the inspectors gave the green light; "There's no signs of a mold problem in these rooms," said Charles Schwartz.



Using [mascara](#) to simulate mold growth, INSIDE EDITION tests some mold specialists.

Next, INSIDE EDITION simply took some ordinary women's eye [makeup](#) and rubbed it on a wall in the kitchen and in an adjacent bathroom, then installed hidden cameras around the house and monitored them from the basement.

Would the contractors, who specialize in mold removal, say they'd found mold or just mascara?

The first contractor took one look and was happy to report that there was no problem. He didn't charge a dime, and neither did a second contractor who recommended a quick fix. "If you want to do something...you can use Clorox® on it and it will come off."



Black mold can be a homeowner's worst nightmare.

Two other men said they needed to do tests. After sending the tests to a lab for processing, the men came back with their results. They correctly informed INSIDE EDITION that there was no fungus detected.

Another contractor though took a look and said, "That's as toxic as it gets."

The man then asked about young children in the home. When informed there were children in the home, the contractor expresses concern saying they "can't be exposed to that."

The contractor also wanted to look in the basement, but the homeowner declined because INSIDE EDITION producers were in the basement, and the man left without charging. Later, INSIDE EDITION contacted the man and he said because he wasn't able to look in the basement, he could not make a full assessment.

Other companies wanted to charge large sums to get rid of the mold, which remember, is nothing more than mascara.

One man who came inside the home took a couple of photos. When asked if he would need to test the "mold" he said, "You don't need to test it because mold is a mold." He assured our homeowner that the black substance he claimed was mold was dangerous. His company wanted \$1,800 to remove it.

INSIDE EDITION's mold expert says "That's the definition of a rip-off."

When the man returned two weeks later to remove the so-called mold he brought all kinds of equipment and sealed the kitchen in plastic.

Later, INSIDE EDITION's Senior Investigative Correspondent Matt Meagher informed the contractor that there is no mold inside the house and that the "mold" is nothing more than eye make-up. The contractor first tried to suggest that the homeowner had already tested it. But previously, the contractor told our homeowner that there was no need to test the "mold." After questioning, the man changed his mind, saying, "This should be tested, of course."

So before paying someone for mold removal, make sure they know what they are talking about.

According to the EPA, in most cases you can handle a spot that's less than 3'x3' yourself. For anything larger, you need a professional.

Tips

The links below from the Center for Disease Control and the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) offer more information for homeowners concerned about mold and moisture in the home:

www.cdc.gov/mold/stachy.htm#Q1

www.epa.gov/mold/moldguide.html

If you think you may have a serious mold problem in your home, the most important thing you can do to protect yourself is hire an independent mold testing company to do an initial inspection. To avoid a possible conflict of interest when hiring a company, make sure the company specializes in mold testing and not mold testing and remediation.

Additionally, inquire with the company about the background of the person doing the testing. Most reputable mold testing companies have staff members with a science background in industrial hygiene and/or [environmental](#) health.

Before hiring a company you also might want to check with your local Better Business Bureau or experienced real estate agencies for suggestions of reputable mold testing and remediation companies.

And as always, if a mold testing company tells you that you have a mold problem, make sure you get multiple estimates from different remediation companies.

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