How to Remove Mold from Shower Caulk and Grout

A step-by-step printable guide — mild methods firs

QUICK FACTS
Time: 30-60 minutes for most showers | Difficulty: Easy to moderate
Start with the mildest method that works. Move to a stronger one only if the stain stays. Mold on caulk and grout is usually surface mold from constant damp — but check the warning box on page 2.

What You Will Need

- Rubber gloves, eye protection, and an N95 mask if the mold patch is large or you are sensitive to mold
- Baking soda and an old toothbrush or grout brush
- 3% hydrogen peroxide (household grade) in a spray bottle
- Household bleach — last resort only — plus a cloth (never a spray bottle)
- Old rags, a bucket of clean water, and a dry towel
- Replacement caulk and a caulk gun, and grout sealer — only if the old caulk or grout is damaged
- A fan or open window for ventilation

Before You Start

- Ventilate the bathroom: open a window, switch the fan on, and leave the door open while you work.
- Put on gloves and eye protection. Wear an N95 mask if the mold area is large or you are sensitive to mold.
- Test every cleaner on a small hidden spot first and wait 10 minutes before cleaning the whole area.
- Work from the mildest method upward. Do not mix cleaners, and never mix bleach with vinegar or ammonia.

Method 1 — Baking Soda Paste (Start Here)

Best for light surface mold and everyday grout stains. Safe for most caulk and grout.

1. Mix a paste of 3 tablespoons of baking soda with 1 tablespoon of water.
2. Spread the paste thickly over the moldy caulk and grout lines.
3. Leave it for 15-20 minutes so it can loosen the mold.
4. Scrub with an old toothbrush or grout brush, working along the grout lines.
5. Rinse well with clean water and dry the area with a towel. Damp grout regrows mold fast.

Method 2 — Hydrogen Peroxide Spray

Best for mold that stays after the baking soda paste. Use 3% household-grade hydrogen peroxide only.

1. Spray 3% hydrogen peroxide directly onto the moldy caulk and grout until damp, not dripping.
2. Leave it for 10-15 minutes. It will fizz lightly as it works.
3. Scrub with a brush, then rinse well with clean water.
4. Dry the area completely with a towel, and leave the fan running for 30 minutes.

Do not mix hydrogen peroxide with vinegar in the same bottle, and do not use it on colored grout without testing a hidden spot first — it can lighten color.

Method 3 — Diluted Bleach (Last Resort Only)

Use bleach only if baking soda and hydrogen peroxide have both failed, and only on white grout and caulk that you have tested first. Bleach removes color from mold but does not always kill mold roots in porous grout, so it is a last resort, not a first step.

1. Mix 1 part household bleach with 10 parts water. Make only what you need, and never use bleach neat.
2. Ventilate well, wear gloves and eye protection, and keep children and pets out of the bathroom.
3. Apply with a cloth or brush — never spray bleach. Spraying fills the air with bleach mist.
4. Leave it for a maximum of 10 minutes. Do not leave it longer.
5. Rinse very well with clean water, scrubbing as you rinse, then dry the area completely.

NEVER mix bleach with vinegar, ammonia, or any other cleaner. Mixing bleach with acids or ammonia creates toxic gases.

When to Replace the Caulk

Cleaning cannot save caulk that is damaged. Replace it if any of these are true:

- The caulk is cracked, peeling, shrunken, or pulling away from the wall or tub.
- The caulk feels soft, spongy, or crumbly when you press it.
- The stain is still there after Methods 1, 2, and 3 — the mold is inside the caulk, not on it.

1. Cut the old caulk out completely with a utility knife or caulk remover tool.
2. Clean the gap, let it dry fully, then apply new bathroom caulk in a smooth, even bead.
3. Smooth the bead with a wet finger, remove the excess, and let the new caulk cure for at least 24 hours before showering or getting it wet.

Seal the Grout So Mold Stays Away

1. Wait until the grout is completely dry — at least 24 hours after cleaning — before sealing.
2. Brush or roll grout sealer along the grout lines only, wiping any sealer off tiles straight away.
3. Let the sealer dry fully, following the product label, before using the shower.
4. Re-seal grout every 6-12 months, or sooner in a shower that is used daily.

Keep Mold From Coming Back

- Run the fan for 20-30 minutes after every shower, and leave the shower door or curtain open so air can move.
- Squeegee the walls after showering — it takes 30 seconds and removes most of the moisture mold needs.
- Fix dripping taps and leaking showerheads promptly; constant drips keep grout damp.
- Wash shower curtains, bath mats, and loofahs regularly so mold cannot spread from them to the grout.

- Wipe up standing water around the tub and on the floor after every shower.

CALL A PROFESSIONAL IF:
• The mold covers more than about 10 sq ft (about 1 sq m).
• Mold is inside the wall, behind tiles, or under the tub.
• There is water damage, soft or swollen walls, or a musty smell that stays after cleaning.
• Anyone in the home has asthma, allergies, or a weak immune system and the mold keeps returning.

Tick-Off Checklist

- ☐ Bathroom ventilated — window open and fan running
- ☐ Gloves and eye protection on (N95 mask if needed)
- ☐ Hidden-spot test done, waited 10 minutes
- ☐ Baking soda paste (3 tbsp + 1 tbsp water) applied and left 15-20 minutes
- ☐ Scrubbed along grout lines and rinsed well
- ☐ Hydrogen peroxide (3%) sprayed and left 10-15 minutes, if stain stayed
- ☐ Bleach used only as a last resort — 1 part bleach to 10 parts water, cloth only, 10 minutes max
- ☐ Area rinsed well and dried completely
- ☐ Damaged caulk replaced and cured for at least 24 hours, if needed
- ☐ Grout sealed after at least 24 hours dry; next re-seal date noted
- ☐ Fan run for 30 minutes after finishing

Notes