



CLEAN LIFE REAL WORLD

A MOLD RECOVERY GUIDE

You're Not Crazy, *It's Mold*

The guide I wish someone had handed me on day one. No fear. No overwhelm. Just truth, direction, and hope.

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Before we begin

If you're here, chances are you've been collecting symptoms for years. Maybe you've been bounced between doctors who tell you everything looks normal. Maybe you've suspected mold but don't know where to start. Or maybe you already went through remediation and now you're standing in your house wondering what you're even allowed to keep.

I've walked this road. Mold toxicity, Lyme disease, mast cell activation, chronic fatigue, and a list that kept growing. I went from functioning to barely able to get out of bed. Conventional medicine minimized it. The people who did take me seriously kept adding more to the pile – thyroid medication, hormone support, gut protocols, more supplements.

What I never got was the whole picture. Nobody looked at my body, my nervous system, and my belongings all at the same time, in the right order.

This guide is what I wish someone had handed me on day one. No fear. No overwhelm. Just truth, direction, and the exact steps I use with my own clients today.

Elena xoxo

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01

CHAPTER ONE

What Mold Illness Actually Is

*"The symptoms look random. They are not random.
They all flow from the same root."*

Mold illness — also called biotoxin illness, mold toxicity, or CIRS (Chronic Inflammatory Response Syndrome) — is a **whole-body condition** that develops from exposure to the toxins mold produces.

Here's what most people don't know

- **Outdoor mold isn't the problem.** You don't get sick from outdoor mold. It can be annoying — it is not what makes you this sick.
- **You get sick from water-damaged buildings.** Hidden leaks, humidity, HVAC contamination, flooding, or old water damage can all create a toxic environment — even when you can't see it.
- **About 25% of people carry a genetic marker** that makes it hard for their body to clear mold toxins. Their immune system stays stuck in fight mode, and inflammation becomes chronic. More on this in the next chapter — it changes everything.
- **Mold toxins affect the whole body.** Brain, hormones, gut, immune system, detox pathways, mitochondria, mood, energy. All of it.

This is why mold illness feels so confusing. The symptoms look random. They are not — they all flow from the same root.

02

CHAPTER TWO

Is This You?

"If you have a mix of these, and nobody has connected the dots, mold is worth exploring."

Mold illness can affect any system in the body. These are the patterns I see most often in my practice.

NEUROLOGICAL

Brain fog & cognitive decline
Memory issues
Difficulty concentrating
Dizziness or vertigo

IMMUNE & INFECTIONS

Recurrent sinus infections
Chronic illness, no clear cause
Slow recovery from illness

INFLAMMATION & PAIN

Joint pain
Muscle pain
Headaches or migraines

DETOX & GUT

Bloating, gas, constipation, diarrhea
Food & chemical sensitivities
Histamine intolerance

EMOTIONAL

Anxiety
Irritability & mood swings
Feeling not like yourself

ENERGY & HORMONES

Fatigue
Sleep issues
Hormone imbalances

If you have a mix of these – and nobody has connected the dots – mold is worth exploring.

03

CHAPTER THREE

Why Some People Get Sicker Than Others

"Same house. Same mold. Two completely different bodies."

Some people can walk into a moldy building and feel nothing. Others get sick fast. And some, like me, become extremely ill over time. The biggest reason is **genetics**.

Around **25% of the population** carries HLA-DR genetics that make it hard for the body to recognize mold toxins as something foreign that needs to be cleared. When your body can't tag the toxin, it can't get rid of it. Your immune system stays stuck in fight mode, inflammation becomes chronic, and the burden just keeps compounding.

Here's the part that explains so much. If you *don't* carry that genetic piece, your body can actually clear mold the way it clears a virus. You might still be injured by exposure, but once you leave the environment, your body starts purging on its own. You may not even realize you were affected until you notice the fog lifting after you leave.

But if you're in that 25%, it never clears on its own. It just accumulates. Exposure after exposure. Day after day.

The same house, two different bodies

I lived this. My ex-husband and I were in the same moldy home. He went to an office every single day, which meant his body had windows every day to start purging what he'd been exposed to overnight. He didn't even realize he had brain fog until he moved out and it lifted.

I was a stay-at-home mom. I was in that house almost all day, every day, for ten years. My body never got a break to purge. It just kept compounding, and compounding, and compounding — until I was bedridden.

**Same house. Same mold.
Two completely different bodies.**

You are not crazy. You are not making this up. Your genetics and your exposure pattern are real — and they explain what happened to you.

04

CHAPTER FOUR

Where Mold Exposure Actually Comes From

"Repeat after me – it is not about outdoor mold."

The real issue is **water-damaged buildings** — even when you don't see mold, can't smell mold, the house looks fine, or you've already had remediation done.

Mold can hide

- Inside walls
- Under flooring
- In HVAC systems and ducts
- Around windows, bathrooms, attics, or any past leak

Dust holds mold spores and the toxins that come with them. Air systems spread them. Your body bears the burden. You don't have to see mold for it to be a problem.

05

CHAPTER FIVE

How to Test Your Body

"There is no single perfect test. These tools together give a clearer picture."

There is no single perfect test. These tools together give a clearer picture.

VCS Test · *Visual Contrast Sensitivity*

An online screening test that looks at how well your eyes detect contrast. Neurotoxins like mold can affect this.

Mycotoxin Urine Testing

Looks for mold toxins being excreted in the urine. Helpful for seeing exposure and detox over time.

Muscle & Energy Testing

A biofeedback tool that helps identify the body's burdens and priorities in real time. I use this regularly in practice to understand what your body is asking for next.

Your history, your symptoms, and your environment matter just as much as the labs. We use all of it together to see the full picture.

06

CHAPTER SIX

How to Test Your Home

"Your environment matters just as much as your body."

Your environment matters just as much as your body. These are the tools I recommend most.

ERMI Test · *Dust Test*

Uses collected dust to identify mold species and give an overall score of your environment's mold burden. Good for a big-picture view.

HERTSMI-2

A shorter scoring system that looks at a handful of highly problematic mold species.

Immunolytics Petri Dishes

Simple plates you leave out in different rooms to see what grows. Helpful as a screening tool.

Qualified Mold Inspector

Ideally a building biologist or inspector who understands water damage, moisture mapping, and hidden mold – not just someone who looks for visible spots.

No single test tells you everything. Together, they help confirm whether your environment is safe or contributing to your illness.



CHAPTER SEVEN

How Healing Actually Starts

"True healing is a sequence. Skip a step, or do them out of order, and your body cannot keep up."

Most people try to jump straight into detoxing mold. That's often where things go wrong. Healing happens in order.

1

You can't heal while you're still living in it

You can survive in a moldy environment. You cannot truly heal there. It's the step most people want to skip – but if you're in the 25%, staying means the burden never stops accumulating. If you're not, leaving still gives your body room to clear what it's carrying.

2

Open drainage pathways

Before you move anything, it has to have somewhere to go. Support, from the bottom up: bowels, liver & gallbladder, kidneys, lungs & skin, lymph, and finally the cellular level. Purge at the cellular level too soon and the toxins simply recirculate – which is why so many detoxes make people feel worse.

3

Detox the toxins and pathogens together

The toxins, and the parasites that feed on them, have to be addressed at the same time. Reduce only the toxic burden and the parasites keep it in circulation; do only a parasite cleanse and new ones move right back in. Addressed together, moving up the drainage funnel, is where results stick.

4

Regulate and rewire the nervous system

Mold illness is traumatic to the body, whether or not it ever felt emotionally traumatic. Once your nervous system has been on high alert for months or years, it doesn't simply reset when you leave. It keeps firing alarms – real physical symptoms – because it's still trying to protect a body that couldn't protect itself before. Rewiring it is what teaches your body it is *actually safe now*.

5

Rebuild long-term health

Once the load is down and the nervous system feels safe, we shift toward resilience – physically, mentally, and spiritually – so you can live fully again, not just survive.

Without this step, people leave, do all the right physical protocols, and still don't feel like themselves. This is not in your head. It's your nervous system, still doing its job a little too well.

08

CHAPTER EIGHT

What To Do With Your Belongings After Remediation

"You found the mold. Now you're standing in a room full of your own things, wondering what's safe to keep."

This isn't every mold situation

Everything in this chapter comes out of my own experience and the clients I work with who are already significantly sick. That's an important distinction, because not every mold issue turns into this.

Mold starts growing within 24 to 48 hours of water damage. If you catch it early – before it's spread and before anyone's been made sick – you can often deal with the source and move on without gutting your belongings. If you found a little water, caught it fast, dried it out, and nobody is sick, you don't need to run every item you own through these rules. The rules that follow get more serious the more serious the injury is.

A NOTE ON MY SCOPE

I am a naturopathic doctor – not a mold remediation contractor, industrial hygienist, or certified inspector. What follows comes from lived experience, clinical research, and the clients I've walked through this. For structural remediation, air-quality certification, or building-safety decisions, please work with a licensed professional *alongside* this guide, not instead of one.

The Dandelion Effect

Mold spores act like a dandelion. Blow on one and the seeds scatter everywhere — invisible, riding the air, landing far from where they started. Every time the air conditioner kicks on, someone walks through a room, or air simply moves, spores disperse throughout the **entire home**. Not just the room with the damage. Everywhere.

You can't see them traveling. But they land on everything — your furniture, your clothes, your books, your kids' toys, the dust on every surface. And once spores land somewhere, if humidity in that spot ever rises above 50 percent, even briefly, they can begin to grow and colonize right there. Invisibly. With no obvious source of moisture nearby.

The absence of visible mold on something you own does not mean it's clean. It means the spores haven't had the right conditions yet — or you simply can't see them.

The general rule of thumb

Ask yourself three questions about anything you're deciding whether to keep:

ASK 01

Can I actually **wash** it?

ASK 02

Can I clean **deep enough** into it?

ASK 03

Is it hard and **nonporous**?

Never use bleach

Bleach is most people's first instinct, and it's the wrong one. Bleach is roughly 90 percent water. On glass or tile, the chlorine reaches the mold sitting on top. But mold on anything porous — wood, drywall, fabric — sends roots down into the material. The chlorine evaporates on the surface; what's left is water that soaks in and **feeds the very roots you were trying to kill.**

Stick with what's effective for the surface: full-strength distilled white vinegar as well as a product like EC3 on hard, nonporous surfaces — and treat anything porous with the washing and porosity rules, not a spray and wipe.

Item by item

Clothing & Textiles KEEP IF WASHABLE

Hot water + EC3 or a cup of Borax. Visible growth → it goes.

Furniture BY THICKNESS

Under ~1 inch of padding can be cleaned. Thicker has to go.

Wood IT DEPENDS

Dense or sealed wood can stay. Porous wood (raffia) → goes.

Glass, Plastic, Metal KEEP

Wipe with EC3 or full-strength vinegar. Easiest category.

Electronics JUDGMENT CALL

I threw all of mine out. If severely affected, weigh the risk carefully.

Books & Papers THEY GO

No exceptions. Spores feed on paper and it can't be washed.

Kids' Toys KEEP IF WASHABLE

Machine-washable plush can stay. If it can't be washed, it goes.

Sentimental & Photos SEAL & STORE

Wipe, seal airtight, store away from home. Revisit later — don't decide in grief.

Give it time. More often than not, with distance, you simply stop caring about it the way you thought you would.



CHAPTER NINE

Recommended Resources

"You don't have to figure out every product on your own. Here's where I'd start."

These are the categories of tools I reach for most. Specific brands change over time – visit cleanliferealworld.com for my current recommendations, or reach out and I'll point you to exactly what I'm using now.

Testing Your Body

VCS screening, mycotoxin urine panels, and muscle / energy testing with a practitioner who works with biotoxin illness.

Testing Your Home

ERMI and HERTSMI-2 dust tests, Immunolytics petri dishes, and a building biologist or qualified mold inspector for anything structural.

Cleaning & Air Quality

EC3 products and full-strength distilled white vinegar for hard surfaces, Borax for laundry, and a quality HEPA air filtration unit for the rooms you use most.

Drainage & Detox Support

Binders and drainage support are powerful – but sequence and dosing matter enormously. Please start these with a practitioner rather than on your own.

Nervous System Rewiring

Brain-retraining and limbic-system programs, plus daily somatic and vagal practices to teach your body it's safe now.

ONE MORE THING

You do not have to do all of this at once — or alone.

If this guide has done its job, you feel two things at the same time: relief that there's finally a name and an order to what you've been living, and maybe a little overwhelm at the size of it all.

That's normal. You don't have to hold the whole map in your head. You only have to take the next right step — and then the one after that.

You are not crazy. You are not exaggerating. Your body has been telling the truth this whole time — and now you know how to listen.

Not Sure If It's *Mold*?

If you read this and thought *that sounds like me* — that's worth listening to. The next step isn't a giant overhaul. It's a single conversation to figure out where you actually are and what comes first.

Book an Integrative Health Consultation

We'll look at your body, your environment, and your history together — and map out your first three steps.

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IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

Please read before you begin

This guide is for educational and informational purposes only. It reflects my personal experience and my work with clients, and it is not a substitute for individualized medical care, diagnosis, or treatment.

I am a naturopathic doctor – not a mold remediation contractor, industrial hygienist, or certified building inspector. Nothing here should be taken as structural, remediation, or building-safety advice. For those decisions, please work with a qualified, licensed professional.

Detox binders, drainage support, and related protocols can be powerful and, taken out of sequence or without supervision, can make you feel worse. Please begin them with a qualified practitioner who knows your full history rather than on your own.

Always consult your physician or a qualified healthcare provider before making changes to your health regimen, especially if you are pregnant, nursing, taking medication, or managing a medical condition.

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