Holistic Abby

MOLD HEALING · HEALTHY HOME · FAITH & FAMILY

My Healthy Home Building Checklist

What I'm checking before the walls close up (and after)

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Hi friend, after finding mold in our old home and going through years of chronic health issues from mold toxicity, I look at building a house so differently now. Our goal is a **mold-free home**, and that starts long before the drywall goes up.

This is the checklist I'm using for our own build: the questions I'm asking, the things I'm checking with my own eyes, and the choices we made along the way. Print it, take it to your builder meetings, and check things off as you go. 🤍

PHASE 1 Planning & Design

Water is mold's best friend, so the best plan keeps water moving away from the house.

- [ ] **Site drainage:** the ground slopes away from the foundation on every side.
- [ ] **Gutters & downspouts** carry roof water well away from the foundation, not right next to it.
- [ ] **Roof overhangs** are deep enough to help shield walls and windows from rain.
- [ ] **Flashing plan:** ask how windows, doors, roof valleys, and wall-to-roof joints will be flashed.
- [ ] **Below the house:** ask about the vapor barrier under the slab or in the crawlspace.
- [ ] **Wet rooms:** ask about moisture- and mold-resistant drywall for bathrooms and laundry.

BEFORE YOU START Questions for My Builder

- [ ] "What moisture reading do you want framing to be at before insulation and drywall?"
- [ ] "Can I walk the house and take my own moisture readings before drywall?"
- [ ] "What happens if lumber or sheathing gets rained on during the build?"
- [ ] "How will the duct openings be protected during drywall and sanding?"
- [ ] "Will the HVAC system be sized for this house with a load calculation (Manual J)?"
- [ ] "Are bath fans and the range hood vented all the way outside?"

PHASE 2 Materials & Dry-In

The sooner the roof, windows, and wrap are on, the less time the bones of your house spend getting wet.

- [ ] Lumber and sheathing are **stored off the ground and covered** on site.
- [ ] I look over deliveries for **dark spots, staining, or musty smells** and ask about anything I see.
- [ ] Roof, windows, and house wrap go on as quickly as possible to **"dry in"** the house.
- [ ] After a rain, standing water is cleared out and wet framing is **given time to dry**, then checked.

PHASE 3 Before Insulation: My Moisture Walk WHAT WE DID

Wood can look dry on the outside and still hold moisture, so I don't trust how it looks.

- [ ] Take readings with a moisture meter on studs, bottom plates, subfloor, and sheathing in every room.
- [ ] Check extra spots **near windows, doors, plumbing, and anywhere water could have collected**.
- [ ] If a spot reads high, **find out why** and give it time to dry. Then re-check before moving on.
- [ ] Look for **leaks, water stains, or discoloration** on framing and the underside of the roof deck.
- [ ] Plumbing lines are **pressure tested** for leaks while the walls are still open.
- [ ] Window and door **flashing and sealing** look complete, with no gaps.

Good to know: aim for wood moisture readings of **16% or less** before closing up the walls. Meters read a little differently by wood type, so ask your builder what number they go by and use the same meter setting each time.

PHASE 4 Insulation & Air Sealing WHAT WE CHOSE

- [ ] **Rockwool (stone wool) in all our walls.** It's made from stone, so it isn't food for mold, and it's water-repellent.
- [ ] **Closed-cell spray foam in our unvented attic.** It resists water absorption much better than open-cell foam, which can soak up water like a sponge.
- [ ] Insulation only goes in over **dry framing and dry roof sheathing**. No sealing in moisture!
- [ ] Spray foam is installed by a **trained crew**, and I ask how long to ventilate and stay out while it cures.
- [ ] Gaps around windows, outlets, pipes, and top plates are **air sealed** so humid air can't sneak into the walls.

PHASE 5 Ventilation & HVAC

- [ ] **ERV** for balanced fresh air: it brings fresh air in and moves stale air out. WE CHOSE
- [ ] An ERV is ventilation, **not** an air purifier or a dehumidifier.
- [ ] Bath fans and the range hood **vent outside**, never into the attic.
- [ ] HVAC is **right-sized**. An oversized system can short-cycle and remove less humidity.
- [ ] A plan to keep indoor humidity around **30–50%**.

PHASE 6 Dust Protection WHAT WE DID

- [ ] **Cover duct openings** during drywall, sanding, and other dusty work.
- [ ] Keep the **HVAC off** while dusty work is happening.
- [ ] **Uncover** all openings before the system is turned on.
- [ ] **Change the filters** after construction and before move-in.
- [ ] Peek into registers and ask about cleaning if dust got in.

PHASE 7 Before Drywall: Final Walk-Through

- [ ] One last **moisture walk** with my meter, re-checking any spot that read high before.
- [ ] **Photo and video every wall**, room by room, so I know where pipes, wires, and framing are later.
- [ ] No wet insulation, no stains, no musty smells. If something feels off, we **pause and look closer**.

PHASE 8 Finishes

- [ ] **Lower-VOC or zero-VOC** paints, primers, and stains.
- [ ] Thoughtful **flooring** choices, especially for adhesives and in wet areas.
- [ ] Lots of **fresh air** while finishes cure, before we move in.

PHASE 9 Move-In Habits

- [ ] A **humidity monitor** in main rooms.
- [ ] **Filter changes** on schedule (HVAC and ERV).
- [ ] Run bath fans during and after showers.
- [ ] Peek under sinks and around appliances often.
- [ ] Water leak alarms under every single water source. These are a must, and they'll let you know if there's any moisture.

My notes & readings

Little steps now, for a healthier home from the start 🤍

I have soooo much more to share about our build, so follow along on Instagram at **@abby.valdez__**.

Dealing with mold in the home you're in right now? Start with my free guide, **Suspect Mold? Your First 5 Steps**, or get the full plan in **MOLD: Where Do I Start?** All of my guides are at **holisticabby.com**.

I'm sharing what we're doing in our own build. I'm not a builder or home inspector, so walk through your plans with your builder and local pros.

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If this checklist was helpful, here's where to find my other guides.

Want the full comprehensive checklist?

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My Building a Healthier Home Checklist goes so much deeper: 24 printable pages, phase by phase, with my before-drywall walkthrough, my never-install list, 60 questions to ask your builder, and "What we did" notes from our own build.

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The detox education and practical resources I wish I'd had.

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The key signs, first steps, and detox basics, condensed into one quick start.

Mold Testing Cost & Decision Cheat Sheet
What each mold test costs and tells you, and which one to start with.

Nervous System Regulation & Mental Clarity
Gentle practices that helped me find my calm again, one breath at a time.

Family Rhythms & Routines: A Natural-Minded Mama's Approach
Small everyday rhythms for a calmer, more connected home — not perfection.

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with love, Abby