Holistic Abby
MOLD HEALING · HEALTHY HOME · FAITH & FAMILY

Suspect Mold? Your First 5 Steps

A gentle, fill-in checklist for the very beginning — from someone who's been there

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Hi friend, take a deep breath. If you're wondering whether mold could be behind how you or your family have been feeling, I've been right where you are, and I know how heavy it can feel.

My story, the short version: for a long season our family was struggling, and I couldn't put my finger on why. Then one naturopath looked at me and said, *"I think you're dealing with mold."* That one sentence changed everything. We tested, found mold hiding mostly in our subfloor, and started the long, hope-filled road to healing. Along the way, I learned I have CIRS myself.

why I love talking about CIRS

CIRS (chronic inflammatory response syndrome) is when the immune system gets stuck "on" after exposure to biotoxins, like the ones that build up in water-damaged buildings. Some of us are simply wired to have a harder time clearing them. Understanding that gave me so much grace for my own body, and it's why I gather clues in a gentle order: notice your patterns, screen, test your home, and then bring it all to your functional medicine doctor or naturopath.

How to use this checklist

Work through one step at a time, check the box as you finish it, and keep your pages, scores, and reports together to bring to your appointment.

- [ ] **Step 1** · Notice your patterns
- [ ] **Step 2** · Take the free online VCS test
- [ ] **Step 3** · Test your home first
- [ ] **Step 4** · Talk with your functional medicine doctor or naturopath about body testing
- [ ] **Step 5** · Your next step

You don't have to climb the whole mountain today. Just start with Step 1.

STEP 1 · ABOUT 10 MINUTES

Notice your patterns

How you feel, and when and where you feel it, holds important clues. Check everything you've noticed over the last few weeks, then tally each group. Come back in a month or two and recheck so you can see what's changing.

Today's date _____ **How I feel overall (1–10)** _____ **Recheck date** _____

Energy & Body

- ☐ Bone-deep tiredness, even after sleep
- ☐ Weak or heavy-feeling muscles
- ☐ Aches all over
- ☐ Muscle cramps
- ☐ Joint pain or morning stiffness

TALLY TODAY ☐ RECHECK ☐

Head & Brain Fog

- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Foggy thinking
- ☐ Forgetting things more than usual
- ☐ Losing words mid-sentence
- ☐ Hard to focus or take in new information

TALLY TODAY ☐ RECHECK ☐

Eyes & Senses

- ☐ Light bothers my eyes
- ☐ Blurry vision
- ☐ Red or watery eyes
- ☐ A metallic taste
- ☐ Dizziness or the room spinning

TALLY TODAY ☐ RECHECK ☐

Breathing & Sinuses

- ☐ Stuffy nose or sinus pressure that won't clear
- ☐ Shortness of breath
- ☐ A lingering cough

TALLY TODAY ☐ RECHECK ☐

Skin & Nerves

- ☐ Tingling or numbness
- ☐ Skin that feels extra sensitive
- ☐ Sudden sharp, stabbing "ice-pick" pains
- ☐ Getting zapped by static shocks a lot

TALLY TODAY ☐ RECHECK ☐

Tummy

- ☐ Belly pain
- ☐ Loose stools or diarrhea
- ☐ Appetite swings

TALLY TODAY ☐ RECHECK ☐

Temperature & Thirst

- ☐ Night sweats
- ☐ A hard time staying warm or cool
- ☐ Thirsty all the time
- ☐ Needing the bathroom more often

TALLY TODAY ☐ RECHECK ☐

Mood & Nervous System

- ☐ Mood swings
- ☐ Feeling anxious or wired
- ☐ Feeling disoriented or confused
- ☐ Restless sleep

TALLY TODAY ☐ RECHECK ☐

Groups with at least one check: ☐ / 8 **Total symptoms checked:** ☐

STEP 1 · CONTINUED

Where & when I feel it

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
I feel better when I'm away from home for a few days	☐	☐	☐
A certain room, my car, work, or school makes me feel worse	☐	☐	☐
I feel worse after rain or in damp weather	☐	☐	☐
Others in my home seem "off" too	☐	☐	☐
We've had a leak, flood, musty smell, or visible spots	☐	☐	☐

Where & what I noticed _____

_____

_____

_____

A gentle note: this checklist is a screening aid to bring to your functional medicine doctor or naturopath, not a diagnosis. It simply helps you tell your story clearly.

STEP 2 · FREE, ONLINE, ABOUT 15 MINUTES

Take the free online VCS test

The VCS (visual contrast sensitivity) test checks how well your eyes pick up faint patterns. Biotoxins can affect this, so it's a simple clue to gather early. You can take it at vcstest.com, which offers free limited results.

What it can do

Give you a useful, low-cost clue to bring to your functional medicine doctor or naturopath, and a number you can recheck over time.

What it can't do

It doesn't diagnose anything, and it can't confirm mold. A passing score doesn't rule things out, either.

what helped me Taking it in a calm, well-lit spot on a screen I could use again, so my rechecks felt like a fair comparison.

My VCS results

Date taken _____ **Result** ☐ Passed ☐ Didn't pass

Right eye _____ **Left eye** _____ **Recheck date** _____

Notes _____

_____

_____

STEP 3 · YOUR HOME

Test your home first

Getting away from the exposure is the foundation of healing, so knowing what's in your home comes early. These are the two mold testing options I trust most.

ERMI through EnviroBiomics

A dust test that looks at the DNA of mold species in your home, which gives you a big-picture look at what's been settling over time. **Order ERMI at EnviroBiomics →**

ImmunoLytics

Gravity plates, swabs, and Dust History: a simple at-home way to see what's growing and which rooms need a closer look. **Shop ImmunoLytics →**

How long do results take?

TEST	AFTER THE LAB HAS YOUR SAMPLE	SHIPPING AND OTHER TIME TO PLAN FOR
ImmunoLytics gravity plates, swabs, and Dust History	Standard lab analysis is typically 5 to 7 business days after your samples are received. Some ImmunoLytics product pages say typical turnaround is about 5 business days from lab receipt to report. Expedited processing may be available — contact ImmunoLytics for current times.	Most kits leave within one business day and typically arrive within five business days. Return shipping is separate; you use your own prepaid label or print one. The lab must receive samples within 10 days of sampling. In winter, they ask you to keep samples at room temperature (above 65°F) for 2 to 3 days before shipping.
ERMI through EnviroBiomics	You choose a processing speed when you order: same-day, 1 day, 2 days, 3 days, or 5 days. These are business days after your sample is received and checked in, and they don't include shipping, weekends, or holidays. For same-day testing, samples must arrive by noon Central Time, or they're processed as one-day service.	Plan for three separate steps: kit delivery, return of your sample to the lab, and lab processing. For overnight kit shipping, place your order before 3 p.m. Central Time for eligible same-business-day dispatch. EnviroBiomics also lists a 2–4 business day return-label option for samples that don't need overnight delivery.

I'd still confirm the timing when you order, because labs can change their schedules.

My home testing notes

Test I used _____ **Date ordered** _____

Date sent _____ **Results back** _____

Areas of concern (room by room) _____

STEP 4 · YOUR BODY

Talk with your functional medicine doctor or naturopath about body testing

Once you have your patterns, your VCS result, and your home results, these are the body tests worth asking about. In my guide I list five CIRS markers: **C4a, TGF-beta1, MMP-9, VEGF, and MSH**. They aren't specific to mold, so they're read alongside your symptoms, your home, and your history as part of a bigger picture. Your functional medicine doctor or naturopath will help decide what fits you and in what order.

TEST	WHAT IT LOOKS AT	ASKED ABOUT	ORDERED	RESULTS BACK
Genetics				
HLA-DR genetic testing	A one-time test that shows whether you carry gene types linked with a harder time clearing biotoxins. It explains why some people are more sensitive; it doesn't diagnose CIRS by itself.	☐	☐	☐
CIRS markers (blood work)				
C4a	An immune signal from the body's first line of defense that can rise after an exposure.	☐	☐	☐
TGF-beta1	An immune messenger tied to how much inflammation your body is carrying.	☐	☐	☐
MMP-9	An enzyme linked with inflammation in blood vessels and tissues.	☐	☐	☐
VEGF	A marker connected to blood flow and how well oxygen reaches your tissues.	☐	☐	☐
MSH	A hormone that helps calm inflammation and plays a part in sleep, energy, and more.	☐	☐	☐
Sinuses				
MARCoNS nasal swab	A hard-to-treat staph in the sinuses. It's very common when you're dealing with mold, so it's worth asking to be tested.	☐	☐	☐

In MOLD: Where Do I Start? I walk you through the full list of body tests I'd ask about and what each one means, from foundational blood work to the sinus and urine testing I talk about.

from my heart I wish I would've had this to get started when I first walked into a naturopath's office.

Questions to ask

- ☐ Which of these tests make sense for me first?
- ☐ What are we looking for with each test?
- ☐ Would this result change what we do next?

My own question _____

Appointment date _____ **Results I'm waiting on** _____

STEP 5 · KEEP GOING

Your next step

You've gathered your first clues, and that's a big deal. When you're ready to go deeper, here's where I'd point you next.

MOLD: Where Do I Start?

Good for: my complete starting guide, with my full family story and the home and body testing I'd start with.

Mold & Detox Quick Start

Good for: the key signs, first steps, and detox basics, all in one quick, easy read.

Mold Testing Cost & Decision Cheat Sheet

Good for: seeing what each mold test tells you, so you can choose your first one with confidence.

my step-by-step tracker

- [ ] Step 1 done: my patterns are checked and tallied
- [ ] Step 2 done: my VCS result is written down
- [ ] Step 3 done: my home test is ordered, sent, or back
- [ ] Step 4 done: my appointment is booked and my questions are ready

What I want to remember

You're not alone, and there is so much hope. The same God who knit your body together walks with you through every step of healing. I'm cheering you on, friend.

with love, Abby

This checklist shares my personal experience and is for educational purposes only; it isn't medical advice. Please partner with your functional medicine doctor or naturopath for your own care.

Some links in this checklist are affiliate links, which means I may earn a small commission at no extra cost to you. I only share what I trust.

Holistic Abby

More from Holistic Abby

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

Want the next steps?

MOLD: Where Do I Start?

My full comprehensive guide walks you through how to test your home and body, what each test means, and exactly where to go from here, so you're never left guessing.

Get MOLD: Where Do I Start? →

Healthy Home Swaps

Simple room-by-room swaps for a safer, calmer home, one easy change at a time.

MOLD: Where Do I Start?

Where to begin, how to test your home and body, and clear next steps.

Mold & Healthy Home Starter Bundle

My three mold and healthy-home guides, plus the testing cheat sheet, in one collection.

The Mold Wellness & Detox Resource Guide

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

Mold & Detox Quick Start

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.

Sick Day: A Natural-Minded Mama's Approach

What we reach for on sick days, so you have a calm place to start.

Browse all guides →

with love, Abby