

Efflorescence

Efflorescence is the white chalky powder that you might find on the surface of a concrete or brick wall. It can be a cosmetic issue, or it can be an indication of moisture intrusion that could lead to major structural and indoor air quality issues.



Indications of Moisture

Efflorescence is the dissolved salts deposited on the surface of a material (such as concrete or brick) that are visible after the evaporation of the water in which it was transported. The moisture that creates efflorescence often comes from groundwater, but rainwater can also be the source

Identifying Efflorescence vs Mold

- Pinched between the fingers, efflorescence will turn into a powder, while mold will not.
- Efflorescence forms on inorganic building materials, while mold forms on organic substances. However, it is possible for mold to consume dirt on brick or cement.
- Efflorescence will dissolve in water, while mold will not.
- Efflorescence is almost always white, yellow or brown, while mold can be any color imaginable. If the substance in question is purple, pink or black, it is not efflorescence.

The following conditions can result from excess moisture in a residence:

- fungi that rot wood
- Mold
- water damage to drywall
- reduced effectiveness of insulation



Removal of Efflorescence

- An acid, such as diluted muriatic acid, can be used to dissolve efflorescence. Water should be applied first so that the acid does not discolor the brick. Following application, baking soda can be used to neutralize the acid and prevent any additional damage to the masonry. Muriatic acid is toxic, and contact with skin or eyes should be avoided.
- A strong brush can be used to simply scrub the efflorescence off.
- Pressurized water can sometimes be used to remove or dissolve efflorescence

Note: The use of water to remove efflorescence may result in the re-absorption of crystals into the host material, and they may later reappear as more efflorescence. It is advisable that if water is used in the removal process that the masonry is dried off very quickly.

Summary Efflorescence is a cosmetic issue, but it indicates a potential moisture problem.