

# **MOLD**

## **What is MOLD?**

Molds are fungi that are found almost everywhere. More than likely you are breathing mold spores right now! Molds grow throughout the environment, inside and out, in soils, on food, on plants, and even on building materials when moisture is present. Molds occur naturally in the environment and are necessary decomposers of organic matter. (Cheese and penicillin are both products of mold.) There are various colors of mold including white, green, black, and orange. They reproduce by releasing microscopic spores that spread easily in the air and can enter a home or building through windows, doors, cracks, and vents.

## **What does MOLD need to grow?**

Like any other living thing, mold needs food and water to survive so damp areas within homes and workplaces are prime areas where it may grow. **MOLD HAS TO HAVE MOISTURE TO GROW!** So the key to avoiding mold growth inside homes and the workplace is by keeping them dry and maintaining them.

## **Can MOLD affect our health?**

Mold affects each person differently. Some of us who are allergic to mold may be more sensitive to mold exposure than those of us who are not allergic. However, exposure to high concentrations of mold and mold spores over time can be unhealthy for anyone. Some of the most common health problems associated with exposures to indoor mold include:

- Nasal and sinus congestion
- Sore throat
- Wheezing and breathing difficulty
- Skin and eye irritation
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Upper respiratory infections
- Asthmatic attacks

\*If you have special health concerns or feel that mold is affecting your health please contact your doctor for help.

## **How do I know if I have a MOLD problem?**

Use your eyes and your nose to determine if your home or workplace has a mold problem. If you see mold and there is a musty smell it is probably safe to assume you may have a mold problem. Also look for signs of moisture problems such as

water leaks in pipes and the roof, standing water, and water stains on the floors, walls, and other building materials.

### **Should I test for MOLD?**

Check the Yellow pages for a list of individuals who perform indoor air quality evaluations (including mold testing) and mold clean up.

### **How should I clean up and remove the MOLD?**

1. Identify the moisture problem and fix it!
2. Immediately begin drying all wet building materials.
3. Remove, bag, and dispose of any building materials contaminated with mold.
4. Clean surfaces of building materials that cannot be disposed of with a non-ammonia soap or detergent in hot water, a stiff scrub brush, and scrub areas with mold.
5. Rinse area with hot water and thoroughly dry. May need to use a wet/dry vacuum, mop or sponge to collect excess water.
6. Disinfect area with 1/4 to 1/2 cup of bleach per gallon of water. The solution may be applied with a sponge, spray bottle, or garden sprayer. **NEVER MIX BLEACH AND AMMONIA!**
7. Allow bleach to dry on the surface area where the mold was. Open windows and use a fan to help dry surfaces.
8. Be sure to collect any excess water again.
9. Vacuum your whole home thoroughly, preferably with a HEPA or filtered vacuum.
10. Be on ALERT for further MOLD growth.

### **How can I protect others and myself while performing MOLD clean up?**

- Wear disposable rubber gloves, goggles, long sleeves and pants, and a medium to high efficiency respirator (N-95 or TC-21C cartridge) available at most local hardware stores.
- Enclose and dispose of all moldy materials in plastic (prior to carrying materials through the home.)
- Hang plastic sheeting in doorways to separate the area your cleaning up in from the rest of the home.
- Do a thorough clean up of area after removing mold.

### **\*\*\*Warning\*\*\***

- If you are allergic to mold or suffer from asthma you should not attempt to clean up the mold and leave the home or workplace while the clean up occurs.

- If the mold is growing over greater than 10 square feet of a surface area within your home or workplace, you may need to hire a professional to clean it up.

### **BE ON THE ALERT FOR FURTHER MOLD GROWTH AND PREVENT IT FROM GROWING!!!**

- Keep humidity levels below 40%!
- Exhaust cooking areas, clothes dryers, and bathrooms to the outdoors. Make sure they do not vent to the attic or inside.
- Have your heating and cooling system checked regularly and change filters monthly.
- Immediately address any leaking pipes, flooded basements, roof leaks, ice dams, and other sources of water within the home or workplace.
- In hot and humid weather use a dehumidifier or air conditioner to lower the humidity within the indoor air.

### **Are there any Federal, State, or Local Regulations that require the clean up of MOLD in the home or workplace?**

Currently, there are no regulations or standards that require mold to be cleaned up or address how much mold you can be exposed to.

#### **Other Resources:**

For more information on mold and mold clean up you may refer to the Environmental Protection Agency's website at <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/moldresources.html>

“A Guide to Mold, Moisture, and your Home”  
<http://www.epa.gov/mold/pdfs/moldguide.pdf>