

## Mold

Concern about indoor exposure to mold has been increasing as the public becomes aware that exposure to mold can cause a variety of health effects and symptoms, including allergic reactions.

Molds can be found almost anywhere; they can grow on virtually any organic substance, as long as moisture and oxygen are present. There are molds that can grow on wood, paper, carpet, foods, and insulation. When excessive moisture accumulates in buildings or on building materials, mold growth will often occur, particularly if the moisture problem remains undiscovered or unaddressed. It is impossible to eliminate all mold and mold spores in the indoor environment. However, mold growth can be controlled indoors by controlling indoor moisture levels.

Many types of molds exist. All molds have the potential to cause health effects. Molds can produce allergens that can trigger allergic reactions or even asthma attacks in people allergic to mold. Others are known to produce potent toxins and/or irritants. Potential health concerns are an important reason to prevent mold growth and to remediate any existing indoor mold growth.

Since mold requires water to grow, it is important to prevent moisture problems in buildings. Moisture problems can have many causes, including uncontrolled humidity. Some moisture problems in buildings have been linked to changes in building construction practices during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Some of these changes have resulted in buildings that are tightly sealed, but may lack adequate ventilation, potentially leading to moisture buildup. Building materials, such as drywall, may not allow moisture to escape easily. Moisture problems may include roof leaks, landscaping or gutters that direct water into or under the building, and unvented combustion appliances.

When mold growth occurs in buildings, some building occupants, particularly those with allergies or respiratory problems, may report adverse health problems. Many people are allergic and develop severe respiratory illnesses related to mold exposure. Allergic reactions can include asthma attacks, chronic sinusitis and various other respiratory problems. Children, the elderly, and people with immune system problems are particularly at risk. The key to mold control is moisture control. Solve moisture problems before they become mold problems!

### Mold Prevention Tips

- Fix leaky plumbing and leaks in the building envelope as soon as possible.
- Watch for condensation and wet spots. Fix source(s) of moisture problems as soon as possible.

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