

What you should know about mold

Molds are fungi that occur naturally in the environment. Mold can be found almost everywhere and is able to grow on virtually any surface that has sufficient moisture.

The number of different species of mold range well into the thousands and most do not present a serious health risk to people. However, some people may be sensitive to molds and may experience nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, wheezing, or skin irritation when exposed to molds. In rare cases, severe reactions may occur.

It is impossible to eliminate all mold or mold spores in the indoor environment, and there are no legal requirements specific to mold. The key to controlling mold is controlling moisture. Common moisture problems include pipe leaks, roof leaks, sewage back-ups, and over flowing toilets, sinks, or bathtubs.

For cleaning small amounts of mold, the United States Environmental Protection Agency recommends scrubbing mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water, and drying completely. To limit your exposure when cleaning up mold, avoid breathing in mold or mold spores, wear gloves, and wear goggles. Be aware that it may not be possible to restore an item to its original appearance.

If mold continues to be a problem in your home, look to your behaviors to

determine whether you may be contributing to the moisture problem that is causing mold. Here are some tips:

- Always use bathroom fans during and after bathing/showering.
- Clean regularly and thoroughly, especially in your bathroom.
- Avoid spilling liquids on carpet. If this occurs, quickly dry carpets.
- Use the kitchen fans when cooking.
- Don't run the shower to humidify your home.
- Avoid using humidifiers unless there is a medical reason to use one.
- Ensure that there is good air exchange in your home to prevent condensation on cold surfaces. Some steps include:
 - open windows when possible,
 - don't block supply and return registers with furniture
 - keep a few inches of space between furniture and walls
 - don't let parts of your home get very cold (such as closets against exterior walls)
 - Watch what you put down drains to avoid clogging and over-flows



Information in this handout was gathered from documents published by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information about mold you may find these websites to be helpful.

<http://www.epa.gov/mold/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/mold/faqs.htm>