



# FACT SHEET

## Mold Inside Homes, Offices, and Schools

Molds and mold spores are present almost everywhere, indoors and outdoors.

Excess moisture promotes the growth of mold indoors.

People with sensitivities to molds are most likely to have allergic symptoms, including worsening of asthma, when they are exposed to molds.

The primary preventive measure is to keep indoor moisture low.

### WHAT ARE MOLDS?

Molds are simple organisms that are present almost everywhere, indoors and outdoors. They can grow on virtually any material – like leaves, wood, paper, dirt, carpet, and foods – as long as they have moisture. Molds release lightweight spores that travel through the air. Molds are very common in buildings where there is excess moisture. Everyone is exposed to some mold every day, without harm.

### HOW DO MOLDS GET INDOORS?

Molds naturally grow indoors, and mold spores also may float into buildings through open doorways, windows, and ventilation systems. Spores in outside air may attach themselves to people's clothing, shoes, and bags, and to animals. When mold spores drop on places with moisture, they can grow.

### HOW CAN MOLDS AFFECT MY HEALTH?

Healthy, non-allergic persons exposed to mold usually do not have health problems.

Some people with sensitivities to molds may have common allergic symptoms such as nasal stuffiness, eye itching and irritation, cough, congestion, or skin rashes if they are exposed to molds. Molds may trigger asthma attacks in persons who are sensitized. Persons without mold allergies may become sensitized to mold if repeatedly exposed to molds.

If you believe that you are ill because of exposure to mold in a building, you should consult your physician to determine the appropriate action to take.

### HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE A MOLD PROBLEM INDOORS?

You may suspect that you have mold if you see discolored patches or cottony or speckled growth on walls or furniture, or if you smell an earthy or musty odor.

### HOW DO I GET MOLDS OUT OF BUILDINGS, INCLUDING HOMES, OFFICES, AND SCHOOLS?

Mold growing in homes or other buildings indicates that there is a problem with moisture. This is the first problem that needs to be fixed.

Mold can be removed by a thorough cleaning of hard surfaces with bleach and water (1 part bleach to 10 parts water). Porous

materials, such as fabric or ceiling tiles, that are moldy should be removed. Professional clean up is needed when there is an extensive amount of mold.

### HOW DO I KEEP MOLD OUT OF BUILDINGS AND HOMES?

As part of routine building maintenance, buildings should be inspected for water damage and visible mold. Excess moisture conditions should be corrected to prevent the mold from growing. Other corrective actions:

- Keep humidity level below 50%
- Use air conditioner or a dehumidifier during humid months
- Ensure adequate ventilation in kitchen and bathrooms
- Use paints with mold inhibitors
- Clean bathroom with mold killing products
- Replace carpets damaged by water

### I FOUND MOLD GROWING IN MY BUILDING. SHOULD THE BUILDING BE TESTED?

The Environmental Protection Agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention do not recommend routine sampling for molds. It is recommended that any known molds be cleaned up. Sensitivity to molds varies greatly between allergic persons, and standards for judging acceptable level of mold have not been established, which makes testing for the mold not reliable in determining a person's health risk.

### WHERE CAN I FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON INDOOR MOLDS?

1. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings," March 2001.

<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/>

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Questions and Answers on *Stachybotrys chartarum* and other molds," March 2002.  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/mold/stachy.htm>

3. New York Department of Health, "Guidelines on Assessment and Remediation of Fungi in Indoor Environments," January 2002.  
<http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/doh/html/epi/moldrpt1.html>