

## What Are Molds?

Molds are fungi that can be found both indoors and outdoors. No one knows how many species of fungi exist but estimates range from tens of thousands to perhaps three hundred thousand or more. Molds grow best in warm, damp, and humid conditions, and spread and reproduce by making spores. Mold spores can survive harsh environmental conditions, such as dry conditions, that do not support normal mold growth.



### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE COMMON INDOOR MOLDS?

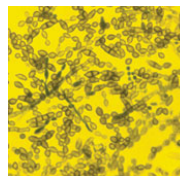
Cladosporium  
Penicillium  
Alternaria  
Aspergillus

## WHERE ARE MOLDS FOUND?

Molds are found in virtually every environment and can be detected, both indoors and outdoors, year round. Mold growth is encouraged by warm and humid conditions. Outdoors they can be found in shady, damp areas or places where leaves or other vegetation is decomposing. Indoors they can be found where humidity levels are high, such as basements or showers.

## WHY IS MOLD GROWING IN MY HOME?

Molds are part of the natural environment. Outdoors, molds play a part in nature by breaking down dead organic matter such as fallen leaves and dead trees, but indoors, mold growth should be avoided. Molds reproduce by means of tiny spores; the spores are invisible to the naked eye and float through outdoor and indoor air. Mold may begin growing indoors when mold spores land on surfaces that are wet. There are many types of mold, and none of them will grow without water or moisture.



## CAN MOLD CAUSE HEALTH PROBLEMS?

Molds are usually not a problem indoors although it can if mold spores land on a wet or damp surface and begin growing. Molds have the potential to cause health problems. Molds produce allergens (substances that can cause allergic reactions), irritants, and in some cases, potentially toxic substances (mycotoxins). Inhaling or touching mold or mold spores may cause allergic reactions in sensitive individuals. Allergic responses include hay fever-type symptoms, such as sneezing, runny nose, red eyes, and skin rash (dermatitis). Allergic reactions to mold are common. They can be immediate or delayed. Molds can also cause asthma attacks in people with asthma who are allergic to mold. In addition, mold exposure can irritate the eyes, skin, nose, throat, and lungs of both mold-allergic and non-allergic people. Symptoms other than the allergic and irritant types are not commonly reported as a result of inhaling mold. Research on mold and health effects is ongoing. This brochure provides a brief overview; it does not describe all potential health effects related to mold exposure.



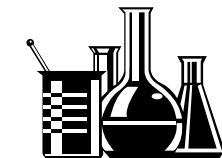
## HOW CAN PEOPLE DECREASE MOLD EXPOSURE?

Sensitive individuals should avoid areas that are likely to have mold, such as compost piles, cut grass, and wooded areas. Inside homes, mold growth can be slowed by keeping humidity levels between 40% and 60%, and ventilating showers and cooking areas. If there is mold growth in your home, you should clean up the mold and fix the water problem. Mold growth can be removed from hard surfaces with commercial products, soap and water, or a bleach solution of no more than 1 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water.

## HOW DO I GET RID OF MOLD?

It is impossible to get rid of all mold and mold spores indoors; some mold spores will be found floating through the air and in house dust. The mold spores will not grow if moisture is not present. Indoor mold growth can and should be prevented or controlled by controlling moisture indoors. If there is mold growth in your home, you must clean up the mold **and** fix the water problem. If you clean up the mold, but don't fix the water problem, then, most likely, the mold problem will come back.

## SHOULD I TEST MY HOME FOR MOLD?



Testing is not recommended as a first step if you have a mold problem. Reliable air sampling for mold can be expensive. Homeowners and people living in apartments generally will need to pay a consultant or contractor to carry out such sampling, because insurance companies and public health agencies usually do not provide this service. Your resources are better used to clean up the mold contamination.

**Renters:** Report all plumbing leaks and moisture problems immediately to your building owner, manager, or superintendent. In cases where persistent water problems are not addressed, you may want to contact housing authorities or pursue legal action

## I WANT TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL TO CLEAN UP THE MOLD, HOW DO I KNOW WHO TO HIRE?

If you choose to hire a contractor (or other professional service provider) to do the cleanup, make sure the contractor has experience cleaning up mold. Check references and ask the contractor to follow the recommendations in EPA's [Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings](#), the guidelines of the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH), or other guidelines from professional or government organizations..

## ARE THERE ANY LAWS OR RULES FOR MOLD?

As of the date of this publication, neither the Southwest Utah Public Health Department nor the State of Utah has no adopted rules specifically regarding mold.

Utah does have the Utah Fit Premises Act (Utah Code Title 57 Ch. 22) which requires owner to maintain the premises as safe, sanitary, and fit for human occupancy. Violations of this act may be dealt with through civil litigation. The health Department does not enforce this act.



## WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

The Centers for Disease Control website:

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

The Environmental Protection Agency Website

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

The Utah Department of Health Division of Epidemiology web site on mold

<http://health.utah.gov/epi/enviroepi/activities/HotTopics/mold.htm>

Portions of this pamphlet were taken directly from the above websites.

Utah Department of Health  
Environmental Epidemiology

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Additional Information may also be obtained from the local housing authority, code enforcement office, insurance companies or a disaster clean-up company.

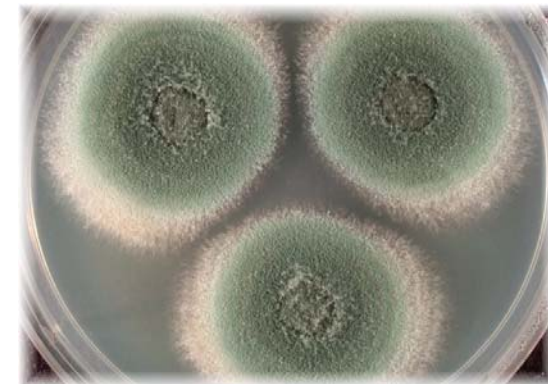
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## Southwest Utah Public Health Department

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MOLD



**Public Health**  
Prevent, Promote, Protect