Additional Information

For additional mold resources, see the following references.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC): https://www.cdc.gov/mold/

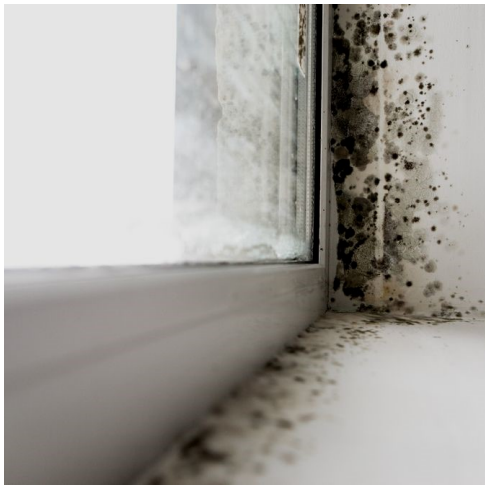
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Indoor Air Quality: https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq

American Industrial Hygienist Association (AIHA): https://www.aiha.org/public-resources/consumer-resources/disaster-response-resource-center/mold-resource-center

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA): https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/molds/

National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Indoor Environmental Quality: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/indoorenv/

Local state mold guidance and legislature



Remove excessive moisture sources to reduce mold growth

United States Air Force
School of Aerospace Medicine

ESOH Service Center
Toll Free 1-888-232-ESOH (3764)
Commercial: (937) 938-3764
DSN: 798-3764
Email: esoh.service.center@us.af.mil

United States Air Force
School of Aerospace Medicine

Military Family Housing

MOLD

Frequently Asked Questions

Mold in the Home

What is mold and where does it grow?
Molds are types of fungi that are found naturally in soil, food, or in any other wet porous materials or surfaces. We are constantly exposed to a variety of molds. Molds travel indoors through windows, doorways, and on clothing, shoes, and pets. Mold grows best in warm, humid environments with poor ventilation. They thrive primarily on organic surfaces including wood, paper, drywall, ceiling tiles, carpets, and upholstery.

What is "Black Mold" and "Toxic Mold"?
Mold comes in many colors including green and black. People often say "Black Mold" when referring to *Stachybotrys chartarum,* but most black mold species are not Stachybotrys. This specific mold is often caused by heavy water damage left unchecked for weeks. Although many studies exist, no link has been proven between Stachybotrys and a specific symptom or disease. Furthermore, referring to mold as "toxic mold" is misleading. Some molds may produce mycotoxins to prevent competing mold species from growing, but the molds themselves are not toxic.

Should I have my home tested for mold?
Mold testing is expensive and is generally not recommended. There are thousands of mold species and no accepted national or international mold health standards. Therefore, health effects cannot be associated to a specific mold level. Additionally, indoor airborne mold levels are extremely variable and laboratory sampling results are highly uncertain. You cannot rely on mold sampling or culturing to determine an individual's health risk. Resources are better spent removing mold and controlling sources of moisture.

Mold and Health

Are molds hazardous?
Each person reacts to mold differently. In healthy people, there is little risk for serious illness because infections caused by mold are extremely rare. Symptoms that may seem to occur from mold exposure, may actually be due to other causes such as building humidity, bacterial, or viral infections.

Who is at risk?
People with allergies or asthma may notice that mold makes their symptoms worse. People with mold sensitivities can experience stuffy nose, coughing, wheezing, and red itchy eyes or skin. If someone's immune system does not work properly, they can develop more serious symptoms. These symptoms include fever, shortness of breath, and rarely, even an infection.

When should I call my doctor?
Most mold related symptoms are treatable with over-the-counter allergy medicines. You should speak to a healthcare professional if you are experiencing persistent symptoms, or have health concerns. Mold spores may remain in the environment after visible mold growth has been removed or cleaned; therefore, symptoms may continue shortly after.

Do I need medical tests for mycotoxins?
Claims of mycotoxins in human samples and building materials are highly suspect. There is no FDA-approved test for mycotoxins in human urine. Mycotoxin levels cannot predict disease. Using non-validated laboratory tests and sampling to diagnose illness leads to misinformation, fear, false diagnosis, inappropriate, and potentially harmful medical interventions and evaluations.

Mold Removal

How do I prevent mold growth?
The EPA recommends maintaining indoor relative humidity between 30-60% to reduce mold growth. Ensure high moisture areas such as bathrooms, kitchens, and laundry rooms vent outdoors. Beware of humidifiers and infusers as they can contribute to humidity. If water accumulates on your windows, wipe it off, especially around the edges.

I found mold, what should I do?
If you find mold signs, remove or repair excessive moisture sources like leaking pipes and clear standing water as soon as possible. Remove humidity with a dehumidifier, air conditioner, or ventilation. Visible mold should be cleaned. If mold keeps returning, notify your local base housing office for assistance.

How do I clean mold?
Absorptive material such as drywall, carpets, or papers, that remain wet for more than 48-hours should be discarded. If the surface is hard and smooth, like a tile or baseboard, use soapy water or a non-ammonia cleaner with a stiff brush to scrub away any visible mold. Bleach and biocides are not recommended for routine mold cleanup and may be hazardous to occupants. It is impossible to completely eliminate all mold and mold spores in the indoor environment, but this will help reduce excessive mold growth.

Should I hire someone to clean my home?
If you have a small area affected (roughly 3-feet by 3-feet size) you can probably clean the affected area yourself. Tenants with allergies, asthma, or more than 10 square feet of mold may request help from their local base housing office, or Resident Hotline (1-800-482-6431).