

MOLD

Molds, sometimes called mildew, are microscopic fungi that can live on almost any surface, given the right conditions. Air, water, or insects can carry mold spores. There are many different types of molds.



SOURCES OF MOLD

Molds thrive in warm, damp, and humid conditions. They can be detected both indoors and outdoors all year long. Outdoors they can be found in shady, damp areas or in areas where there are piles of dead plants and trees. Indoors they can be found in basements and showers, or wherever humidity levels are high.

Indoor humidity levels can vary from room to room. For example, certain rooms in a building, such as the kitchen or bathroom, may have higher humidity levels than other rooms in the same building. Mold can also be found in damp areas of the building where a roof leak or faulty plumbing has caused water damage.

AREAS CAPABLE OF HIGH MOLD GROWTH

- Carpets (damp or water damaged)
- Wicker furniture
- Plant pots or baskets
- Water damaged areas such as doors, walls, windows, carpets, bathrooms, and kitchens
- Basements
- Shady areas
- Dehumidifiers, air conditioning, humidifiers, fish tanks, heating and air conditioning ventilation systems
- Areas near open doors and windows, heating, cooling, and intake vents for central ventilation systems
- Greenhouses
- Saunas
- Farms
- Construction areas
- Flower shops
- Summer cottages



HOW MOLDS AFFECT PEOPLE

Many people are sensitive to molds. Exposure to molds can cause symptoms similar to colds and pollen type allergies such as nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, or wheezing among sensitive people. Some people may have a more severe reaction to molds, including fever and shortness of breath. Allergic reactions to specific fungi are usually attributed to the inhalation or exposure to fungal spores. Environmental sampling, combined with the identification of the suspected allergens through medical consultation with a doctor, is the best way to identify an allergy to mold.

DECREASE EXPOSURE TO MOLDS

The most successful form of treatment of mold allergies is avoiding or minimizing exposure to mold. Therefore, it is important to eliminate, or at least control, the growth of the fungi in the environment. Sensitive people should avoid areas that are likely to have mold, such as compost piles, cut grass, and wooded areas. A tight-fitting mask may be worn to protect sensitive people in areas where exposure to mold is unavoidable.

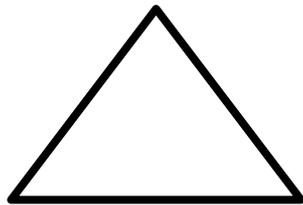
CONTROL MOLD GROWTH

Three of the most important environmental conditions affecting mold growth are temperature, humidity, cleanliness, and sometimes darkness.

Residential and office buildings can be ideal habitats for growth, as molds thrive in the temperature range of 65°F to 90°F. In addition to warm temperatures, molds also grow well in areas of high humidity and moisture. Molds will not develop at humidity levels that are less than 50%.

Additionally, in order for molds to grow, the new mold colonies must be left intact. Cleaning, dusting, or washing walls and surfaces disturbs the mold's habitat and makes it difficult for the mold to continue to grow. To clean walls, mix one part bleach with eight parts water, and then rinse with vinegar and water. Be sure that the wall or surface dries completely.

TEMPERATURE



CLEANLINESS

HUMIDITY

The following is a list of activities that will reduce mold growth:

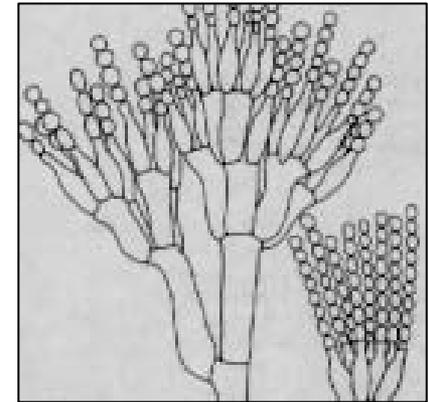
- Clean bathrooms frequently and thoroughly with disinfectant
- Do routine property maintenance
- Clean or eliminate carpeting, especially in bathrooms and basements
- Remove or replace previously soaked carpets and upholstery
- Use an air conditioner or a dehumidifier during humid months
- Use an electrostatic air filter
- Ensure adequate ventilation (e.g. exhaust fans in kitchen/bathroom)
- Fix causes of excess water, such as roof leaks and plumbing leaks
- Eliminate exterior shade
- Irrigate in the morning and don't over-irrigate shaded areas

For additional information on the Internet, please access:

www.epa.gov/iaq or
www.cal-iaq.org

San Luis Obispo County
Environmental Health Services
2156 Sierra Way
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
Phone: (805) 781-5544
Fax: (805) 781-4211

MOLD



Magnified image of Penicillium, a type of mold



San Luis Obispo County
Environmental Health
Services
www.slocounty.ca.gov/ehs