

Mold Guidance

What Is Mold?

Mold is a type of fungus that can produce spores which are released into the air. It can be found almost anywhere that moisture and organic matter are present. The most common indoor mold species are *Cladosporium*, *Penicillium*, and *Aspergillus*. *Stachybotrys* is a greenish-black mold sometimes referred to as “toxic mold,” but all molds should be treated the same with respect to potential health risks and removal.

Where Is Mold Found?

Mold can be found everywhere, and can be detected both indoors and outdoors, year-round. Persistent warm and humid conditions promote mold growth. Outdoor mold can be found in shady, damp areas or places where leaf debris or other vegetation decomposes. Indoor mold can be found where humidity levels are high (like basements and showers) and where moist organic material accumulates (e.g. dirty carpets). Spoiled, rotten food is also a typical source of mold growth. It is common for mold to grow on material like fiberboard, gypsum board, and paper.

Mold and Your Health

Exposure to damp and moldy environments may cause a variety of health effects, or none at all. For people who are sensitive to mold, exposure can cause nasal stuffiness, throat irritation, coughing or wheezing, eye irritation, and in some cases, skin irritation. People with mold allergies may experience more severe reactions. Immunocompromised individuals and those with chronic lung illnesses need to follow the guidance of their healthcare provider.

Exposure Risks

In general, when considering the risk of exposure to indoor mold growth, the following should be recognized:

- There are currently no accepted quantitative standards for mold exposure. Since mold and other fungal spores are common in the natural environment, most guidelines focus on the amount and location of visible mold growth and comparison of indoor and outdoor spore levels.
- Airborne spore levels can vary greatly over time due to changes in environmental conditions and activity patterns.

Based on the potential for allergic reactions, mold growth and dampness in buildings should be monitored and addressed in order to promote a healthy indoor environment.

For more information please see UC Berkeley's [Mold Awareness and Guidance Program](#).

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Testing for Mold

Generally, it is not necessary to identify the species of mold growing in a building, and the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) does not recommend routine sampling for mold. Current evidence indicates that allergies are most often associated with mold. Since the susceptibility of individuals to mold can vary greatly, sampling is not a reliable method for determining health risk. If one is susceptible to mold, there is a potential health risk where visible mold growth or odors are present in the indoor environment. Therefore, no matter what type of mold is present it should be removed. Furthermore, reliable sampling for mold can be expensive, and standards for judging what is, and what is not, an acceptable or tolerable quantity of mold have not been established.

When Health Effects Caused by Mold Are Suspected in the Workplace

If allergic reactions are experienced only when in the workplace, it might indicate an indoor air quality issue caused by mold that should be investigated. Contact the Office of Environment, Health & Safety (EH&S) for assistance.

If a water leak or condensation is observed that is providing moisture for mold growth, place a work order with Facilities Services. Mold growth in campus housing should be directed to Residential & Student Service Programs (RSSP) Maintenance.

Any visible mold growth in the workplace should be removed. Anyone who does not have an allergic reaction when near mold can clean small amounts of mold (one square foot or less), but should use the following procedures at minimum:

1. Spray the surface with a cleaner/disinfectant such as Windex®, or a 10% bleach solution
2. Use a single-use material, like paper towels, to wipe the area and dispose of the used material in a closed container
3. Dry the surface with a single-use material and dispose in the same way
4. Monitor the area daily to determine if further actions should be taken to eliminate the source of moisture and recurrence of mold.

Larger areas of mold growth can be cleaned by custodial services, or in some instances referred to a contractor.

Additional Resources

[Environmental Protection Agency: Mold](#)

[National Institutes for Health: Mold](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Mold](#)

[CDPH Statement on Building Dampness, Mold and Health](#)