

# All About...Mold

**Mold**...literally a growing concern. National media attention has alerted the public to the destructive and possibly toxic dangers of hidden mold spores that could affect their family's health and their homes. EPA studies indicate that air levels of indoor pollutants may be two to three times higher than outdoor levels. Mold, the most dangerous offender of all, often goes undetected because of its invisibility. Most people spend as much as 90% of their time indoors and are not aware of the health hazards created by this pollutant. You owe it to yourself to minimize your exposure to mold spores in the indoor environment. Test for mold today!

## **How Can Someone Be Exposed To Mold?**

There are several ways you can become exposed to mold: Breathing in the spores from the air; Skin contact from handling an item that has mold growing on it; Eating without properly washing your hands after handling moldy objects.

## **Can mold cause health problems?**

Mold has the potential to cause health problems and even make a home uninhabitable. However, everyone is affected differently when in contact with mold. The mold that may not bother the seller may severely affect the buyer. Some mold can cause allergens, irritants and (in some cases) potentially toxic chemical substances known as mycotoxins. People who are sensitive and exposed to mycotoxins can become ill. Allergic reactions to mold are common. They can be immediate or delayed. People diagnosed with allergies and asthma may be very sensitive to mold. Mold can cause asthma attacks. Others at risk may include: infants, children, the elderly, immune-compromised patients, pregnant women and individuals with existing respiratory conditions.

With exposure, even in small amounts, mold may cause: Itching or irritation of the nose, eyes, throat or skin, mysterious skin rashes, sinus infections or congestion / sinusitis (runny nose), respiratory problems (sneezing and coughing), upper or lower respiratory infections, fatigue, frequent headaches, trouble concentrating, memory lapses, or confusion, mood swings, anxiety, depression, chronic aches and pains or digestive problems.

## **Where Is Mold Found In The Home?**

Mold can be found in several areas in the home environment. It appears most often in moist areas as little black circles or thread-like white objects. It is usually accompanied by a musty-type odor. Outdoors, mold plays a natural part in the environment by breaking down dead organic matter such as dead trees or fallen leaves. Mold reproduces by means of microscopic spores; the spores are invisible to the naked eye and float through the indoor and outdoor air. Mold begins to grow indoors when mold spores land on surfaces that are wet or damp. Mold will not grow without water or moisture. Therefore, it is important to dry water-damaged areas and items within 24 to 48 hours to prevent mold growth.

Some examples of places where mold can be found inside the home include: Basement, kitchens (bottom of fridge), around bathroom vanities, washer/dryer area, underside of carpets and pads, surface of walls behind furniture (where condensation forms), ceilings and the top sides of ceiling tiles, front and back side of drywall, wallpaper and paneling, inside HVAC systems and ductwork, clothing and food.

## **How Can I Reduce or Eliminate Mold Inside My Home?**

It is impossible to completely eliminate all mold and mold spores indoors. Mold will always be found floating in the air and in house dust. Indoor mold growth can be prevented by controlling water and moisture indoors. The following may prevent or reduce indoor mold growth: repair any water leaks; provide good air circulation; all HVAC systems should have a good electrostatic air filter on the return; use bathroom, kitchen and laundry room exhaust fans; insulate and ventilate attic and crawl space areas; clean, dry or remove items that are damaged by water immediately.

## **Real Estate Deals DO NOT Need To Be Broken!**

If the home you are thinking about purchasing has mold, **do not panic!** You can remove unusual mold levels from the home, and bring it back to the original condition.

**Since there has been so much media hype surrounding mold, prospective home buyers want a home that has been mold inspected. Mold sampling has become a standard practice during a home inspection. You should not buy a home with mold, sell a home with mold or live in a home with mold. A mold inspection is your first line of defense.**

To find out if mold is a problem in your home, you **MUST** have a mold inspection conducted by a certified inspector.

**Visual Inspection:** A visual inspection is the initial step in identifying possible contamination problems. It will identify any visible water leaks or moisture stains on ceilings, walls, floors or under counters. The air conditioning and heating systems, the attic and crawlspaces under homes will receive a visual inspection as well. Mold sampling will be recommended if there is any noticeable suspicious growths, musty odors, visible water damage or stains, poorly maintained HVAC systems or construction defects. By combining a visual inspection with air, tape or swab sampling, the Inspector can help identify the hidden source of mold, allergens and indoor pollutants and the extent of any acute or chronic water or moisture damage.

**Air Sampling:** The purpose of air sampling is to determine the type and amount of airborne contamination in a building. Air sampling may be necessary if the presence of mold, allergens or toxins is suspected (e.g.: musty odors, allergies) but cannot be identified by a visual inspection. When air sampling is performed, both the indoor air and outdoor air are sampled, so the results can be compared to see if a problem exists. Typically, the indoor sample is taken while the heating and/or air conditioning unit is operating; this will insure the interior air is effectively sampled.

**Tape/Swab Sampling:** Tape and/or swab samples are usually collected from visible moldy surfaces by wiping the area with a sterile swab. This type of sampling is used to identify specific mold types.

**Recommendations and Laboratory Results:** Once the home has a visual inspection and the mold circumstance evaluated, action can be planned to clean it up and prevent future contamination. Based upon site evaluations and sampling lab analysis results, your inspector can provide a detailed written report that can be used for disclosure and references. In all situations, if mold exists, the underlying cause of the water damage must be corrected.

**CALL MJS INSPECTIONS  
FOR YOUR MOLD INSPECTION NEEDS  
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