Mold

Not everyone is bothered when exposed to mold. People who have asthma, bronchitis, hay fever, allergies, or weakened immune systems are more likely to react to mould. Most common symptoms are runny nose, eye irritation, skin rash, cough, congestion and aggravation of asthma. Symptoms usually disappear after mould exposure stops. Most often, there are no known long-term consequences to workplace exposures.

Sampling

It is very difficult to test effectively for mold as mold spores are present in almost all indoor buildings.

- Air sampling cannot conclusively distinguish between normal background mold spores & excessive mold growth.
- There is a high natural variability of airborne mold spores in external environments & buildings.
- There is no precise formula to distinguish normal background levels from elevated mold spore levels.
- There is no widely accepted evidence-based criteria that attribute a common set of adverse health effects to exposure to airborne mold (e.g., allergic reactions depend of individual sensitivity).
- Spore trap identifications can be inaccurate as there are currently no established norms.
- Wall cavity sampling may not be directly related to occupant exposure.

If air sampling is done, outdoor comparison samples should also be taken. If there is a dominating presence of one or two kinds of mold indoors and an absence of the same kind outdoors, this may indicate a moisture problem and degraded air quality.

The single most valuable investigative tool in a mold assessment is visible mold and a history of excessive, unplanned moisture episodes such as water leaks, high humidity levels and/or condensation, repairs and complaints related to moisture?

To Prevent Mold

Keep the home dry. Surfaces should not be allowed to remain wet for more than a day.

- Use a dehumidifier if moisture is excessive. Ensure that the condensate drain pan of the dehumidifier is emptied regularly.
- Find and fix water leaks in the foundation, walls or roof. Keep roof gutters cleaned.
- Fix plumbing leaks and other water problems as soon as possible. Dry all items completely.
- Consider installing exterior vented exhaust fan in rooms such as kitchen, laundry or bathroom if there is a lot of humidity.
- Discard clutter and excess stored materials particularly in basements and crawl spaces.
- Be sure your clothes dryer exhausts outside. Remove lint every time you use the dryer.
- Cut down the number of potted plants in the house—soil is a good place for mold.
- Clean and maintain the home regularly.
- Encourage lifestyle practices that reduce moisture. (Baths instead of showers).

Mold Clean up

How to clean up small mold problems (fewer than three patches, each smaller than a square meter). A small clean up should take minutes (not hours) to finish. When the clean up takes hours to a day to finish, it is suggested you upgrade your method of mold remediation or preferably, seek professional assistance.

- Wear a mask (3M 8210 or equivalent, safety goggles and rubber gloves & scrub mold off hard surfaces with unscented detergent & water, sponge area with clean wet rag. Dry completely.
- Moldy absorbent & porous material must be discarded & replaced.
- Seek professional help if there is a lot of mold or if mold comes back after cleaning.

Taken in part from The American Industrial Hygiene Association Guideline 3-2004 and CMHC - Building, renovating & maintaining