

Mold

WHAT IS MOLD?

- Mold is a type of fungus that grows in moist areas on natural forms of material, including food, fabrics, carpets, upholstery, walls, and ceiling tiles.¹ Mold usually will grow in damp environments such as basements, kitchens, bathrooms, air conditioning units, refrigerators, and potted plants.^{1,2} Sewage leaks can cause toxic molds or "black mold."

HOW ARE WE EXPOSED?

- Mold exposure occurs through inhalation and skin contact with affected surfaces.³
- Poor indoor ventilation and air quality may cause mold exposures.²

SYMPTOMS & HEALTH PROBLEMS

- Mold exposure can lead to respiratory symptoms including rhinitis, sneezing, eye irritation, coughing and wheezing.^{3,4,5,6}
- Children and adults may experience

allergic reactions or worsening of asthma symptoms from mold exposure.^{2,7,8,9}

- Mycotoxins are toxic chemicals produced by molds. Exposure to mycotoxins in the air is linked to pulmonary bleeding (bleeding in the lungs), sudden death in some reported infant cases, and organic dust toxic syndrome (ODTS) in some documented adult cases.^{1,3,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17} ODTS is a general term for illness caused by inhaling bacterial endotoxins or fungal toxins, causing respiratory symptoms and fever a few hours after exposure.^{1,18}
- Mycotoxins are also associated with some kinds of cancer.¹⁹

FOLLOW UP ACTION

- If you think your patient may have been exposed to mold, report to Public Health Nurse (PHN) or refer patient to a physician.

REDUCING YOUR EXPOSURE

You can prevent or minimize mold growth and subsequent exposure in the following ways:

- Keep indoor environments dry. Within 24 hours of a leak or flood, clean up all water and remove water-damaged items.³ Keep indoor humidity levels between 30-40%.
- Properly ventilate indoor environments.²

To remove mold growth:

- Wearing protective gloves and a dust mask, clean affected areas with soap and water, then apply a solution of 1 part vinegar and 1 part water, and wipe clean.³
- Make sure to ventilate the area by opening windows and turning on ceiling and exhaust fans.
- Toxic mold removal may require professional help.

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