

What is mold?

Mold is a type of fungus. It grows on surfaces in masses of branching threads which resemble dense cobwebs. Active mold can be any color, depending on the species.

Where can mold be found?

Molds can be found almost anywhere: they can grow on virtually any substance when moisture is present. Molds reproduce by forming tiny spores just as plants produce seeds. When mold spores land on a damp spot indoors, they may begin growing and digesting whatever they are growing on in order to survive. There are molds that can grow on wood, paper, carpet or food. When excessive moisture or water accumulates indoors, mold growth will often occur, particularly if the moisture problem remains undiscovered.

How can molds affect my health?

The most common types of mold are generally not hazardous to healthy individuals. However, people who have asthma, hay fever or other allergies, or have weakened immune systems are more likely to react to mold.

For more information on mold or indoor air pollutants contact:

Environmental Protection Agency
Region 2 (NJ, NY, PR, VI)
290 Broadway
New York, New York 10007-1866
Phone: 212-637-3000
Fax: 212-637-3526

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MOLD

MONMOUTH COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
50 EAST MAIN STREET
FREEHOLD, NJ 07728
PHONE: 732-431-7456
FAX: 732-409-7579

WWW.VISITMONMOUTH.COM/HEALTH



What Is stachybotrys chartarum?

Stachybotrys chartarum (also known as stachybotrys atra) is one mold that is associated with health effects in people. It is greenish-black in color and tends to grow on material with a high cellulose content (such as drywall sheetrock, dropped ceiling tiles and wood) that become chronically moist or water damaged, due to excessive humidity, water leaks, condensation, or flooding.

How can I tell if this type of mold is present in my home?

Many molds are black in appearance but are not Stachybotrys Chartarum, for example, the black mold commonly found between bathroom tiles. Stachybotrys Chartarum can only be positively identified through microscopic exam or by specially trained professionals.

How can Stachybotrys chartarum affect your health?

There has been some evidence linking the Stachybotrys mold with pulmonary hemosiderosis, a condition that causes bleeding in the lungs of infants generally less than six months old. This is a very rare condition. In cases of hemosiderosis, the exposure to stachybotrys chartarum came from highly contaminated dwellings, where the infants were continually exposed over a long period of time.

How do I clean up mold?

The source of the water problem must first be corrected. All roof or plumbing leaks/flooding must be fixed.

All moldy surfaces should be cleaned with a household bleach (like Clorox) and water mix = 1 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water. You can add a little dish soap to the bleach water to cut dirt and oil on the wall that can hold mold. With good ventilation, apply the bleach water mix to the surface with a sponge. Let it sit for 15 minutes, then thoroughly dry the surface.

Be sure to wear a dust mask, rubber gloves and open lots of windows when cleaning with bleach water. Persons with any respiratory health problems (e.g. asthma, emphysema) should not perform the cleanup.

Keep safety in mind!

How can I eliminate mold from my home?

There is no practical way to eliminate all mold and mold spores in the indoor environment; the way to control indoor mold growth is to control moisture.

What actions can be taken to control mold?

- Wash mold off hard surfaces and dry completely. Absorbent materials, such as ceiling tiles and carpet, may have to be replaced if they are contaminated with mold.
- Fix leaky plumbing or other sources of water.
- Keep drip pans in your air conditioner, refrigerator, and dehumidifier clean and dry.
- Use exhaust fans or open windows in kitchens and bathrooms when showering, cooking, or using the dishwasher.
- Vent clothes dryers to the outside.
- Maintain low indoor humidity, ideally between 30-50% relative humidity. Humidity levels can be measured by hygrometers, which are available at local hardware stores.
- Place or adjust outside gutters and drains so that water does not collect near the outside walls. Check gutters and drains regularly to avoid clogs. Place lawn sprinkler systems so that they do not soak outside walls.

