



Mold (Biologicals)

Information Sheet

Scientific Background



Biological contaminants include fungi (mold, mildew), bacteria, virus, animal dander, cat saliva, cockroach parts and feces, pollens, dust mites parts and their feces. The natural environments contain all of these materials.

People react differently to biological agents – headaches, respiratory, eye, ears, or noise irritation, nausea, sleep disorders, etc. Young children and the elderly appear to be more susceptible to experiencing health symptoms when exposed to biological agents. Since most symptoms are due to an allergic reaction and only a percentage of the population has a reaction to any one allergen, only a percentage of the population will be allergic. There may be four people in a home and only one person will be experiencing symptoms due to the exposure.

Some times allergic reactions occur immediately after exposure. Other times, reactions are the result of previous exposure, so the person cannot easily connect the cause with the effect. Some people experience a *sensitizing* event that leaves them highly reactive to contaminants they had no reaction to before. Frequently after the event, these people are reactive to a range of contaminants, most of which had not bothered them before.

There appears to be a cumulative effect to exposure to mold (fungi). A person who has no symptoms today may become sensitized and have health symptoms later if they are exposed to a moldy environment for an extended period of time.

Reference: www.epa.gov/mold

Discovery



It is not healthy to live in a moldy environment, so if you can see mold or there is a musty smell associated with mold there is a problem that may need to be corrected. You can have your home tested for mold, but generally it is not necessary if you smell or see mold.

Sometimes your nose tightens up, or you might even get a headache. If you re-enter your home or cabin after it's been locked up, you may smell a musty odor. This odor is caused by mold. Find where the odor is most intense to see if mold is present. Since the sense of smell decreases rapidly, it is best to smell for mold after being away for a while.

Fixing the Problem



When excessive moisture or water accumulates indoors, mold growth will often occur, particularly if the moisture problem remains undiscovered or un-addressed. There is no practical way to eliminate all mold and mold spores in the indoor environment, **the key to mold control is moisture control.**

- Vent bathrooms, kitchens, clothes dryer, Stove hood and toilets directly outdoors.
- Fix water leaks and clean up after floods
- Ventilate in cold weather
- Dehumidify or air condition in warm weather (RH < 50%)

To improve air quality, reduce the dust mites and animal dander. Remember, this is especially true in the areas where you spend a great deal of time, such as the sleeping area or office. This can be done by

- Washing your bed sheets weekly in water temperatures of at least 130°F
- Vacuuming the mattress, chairs and carpeting regularly
- Replacing the pillows every 5 years and installing solid surface floors.