

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MOLD

What are the “red flags” or indicators for mold ?

Moisture and dampness marks are indicators for mold. Odor is also a reliable indicator. Think school locker with yesterday’s used gym cloths. That odor is a red flag in a home. Dusty looking “splotches” on walls, ceiling or contents is also an indicator of mold.

What can be the cause of mold contamination ?

There is obvious water intrusion such as roof and basement leaks. There are also the “not so obvious” leaks. These include the existence of crawl spaces and interior French drains. There are also the minor plumbing leaks that have gone on for a long time, but only look damp but hide lots of moisture behind walls. There are also the sneaky leaks such as from air conditioning systems, leaking windows and doors, patios or porches that touch the house wall, but are not caulked, or decks with bolts into the home that are not sealed. Sewer backups or prior flooding can be a source of mold as well as disease.



Is there good mold and bad mold?



Mold is used to process our food, make antibiotics and other medicines. It is even being researched as a method to replace oil. Just as just about everything in life, mold can be good and it can be bad. It depends on how much of what type near which person. If you created an environment free of mold, it would need to be so toxic that it would kill almost every living thing in that area. Mold is a beneficial part of our ecosystem, but can be a health issue.

Blue Cheese and penicillin are two examples good products created from mold.

I do not see any mold, How can there be any mold in the building ?

We have a great video showing a home with toxic mold behind walls that did not show a single spot of visible mold. The video can be found at: www.EnviroSpect.info/videos That home had a very high level of potentially toxic mold.

Is the answer to mold simply taking some Clorox and wiping it up?

The answer is maybe, but probably not. The EPA suggests that up to 10 square feet, consumers can simply wipe up the mold. The problem is that most often, an area of intense mold may be only a few square feet, but it is far from the end of the contamination. Often adjacent areas and areas behind walls have far much more mold than the area originally cleaned. The other complication is that the cause of the mold growth should be addressed, or the mold will be right back. If you cleaned the mold off the top of a piece of bread, you would not think that the mold will not soon be back on that piece of bread, often, in a far greater amount.

Is Clorox a professional solution for mold cleanup?

Clorox and most types of soap will kill mold on contact. You will never see this written in Clorox sales materials. If they claimed that it killed mold, Clorox would be subject to federal EPA and state regulation as a pesticide. That may result in limitations to its use and a bunch of warning labels and regulatory huey. The folks at Clorox are a lot brighter than to allow that to happen, Clorox works as a topical wipe material on the surfaces it touches, everyone knows it, end of story.

Interior French Drains are installed to remove the basement leaks, how can they be a source of mold?



Because they do not remove the water. They remove the symptom of water, which is visible water leaking into the basement. They do not remove the amount of water coming into the home.

Instead of preventing water in the basement, the water soaks the soil under the concrete and tends to grow more of the “wet” or potentially more toxic molds in the wet soil. Think rolled up gym clothes in a school locker over the weekend. That is the environment of the wet soil inside of the french drain system.

The people have lived in the home for 50 years and never got sick. How can there be a bad mold problem ?

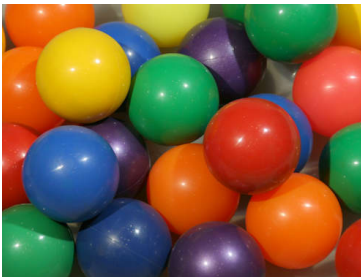
There are kids that can eat a peanut and become deathly ill. Other children live on PB and J. We are individualized in how we react to the environment around us. We have had clients live in a home with the same condition for decades and never become sick. That is.... until those people have another illness or the aging process diminishes their immune systems. We are the sum total of all of our exposures, and let me tell you, new exposures are being created every day with new products, systems and chemicals. A new production printer in an office has the potential to “off gas” chemicals that weaken your immune system enough that another exposure makes you ill. As the kids say today: “It’s complicated”.

The house has been closed up for the last two years. Won’t everything be OK when the house is lived in again ?

That is kind of like you let the weeds grow up in a yard and then decided to cut the grass. The weeds need dealt with. The mold in the home needs dealt with. When you have an out of control growth you have seeds (spores) everywhere that will grow new mold. The mold conducive conditions need corrected and then the contamination cleaned.

What does “Overloaded” mean when I receive my mold results?

When we test for mold results are usually given in spores per cubic meter. That number is achieved by counting the number of mold spores on a slide located in the spore trap.



When the term "present" identifies the number of spores on a slide, that indicates that there are too many spores to count, which in turn is described as that the amount of spores is overloaded. That does not occur until the level of mold is over 125,000 --- 150,000 spores per cubic meter.

What that means is the mold on the slide is so piled up you can't count individual mold spore (like counting the number of balls in one of those big carnival enclosures with all of the balls that kids dive into). As the threshold where we become concerned about the amount of mold in a building is 2,000 spores per cubic meter, (and 125,000 is much, much higher) if you could define the number, that information does not provide any benefit. The bottom line is that the level far exceeds any acceptable standard and test results that are overloaded indicate the property should be remediated

We have a bid to spray the place, and other bids to do all this fancy stuff. What needs to be done?

Let's say your kitchen counter is dirty. You wipe the counter today. The Howards do wipe our tables and counters every morning when we come down for breakfast. So let's say you wipe your counter today and come down tomorrow after a day of regular use today. Do you need to wipe the table tomorrow ? Of course you do! The “spray or fog the house today and everything is done” is the same problem. The contamination needs removed and the environment needs changed to reduce the growth of the mold. Otherwise you are wasting your money and putting someone's health at risk.

What about the houses with that EIFS foam. What is the story there?

We do not always want to believe anecdotal stories. The truth is that when EIFS is not properly installed, water leaks into the walls. Mold may never make its way to be visible. What I can tell you (past the news stories and many legal briefs and lawsuits) is that I did test and access such a property with EIFS that the mold was not visible. It absolutely was not visible. However, I cut into the interior walls and the pink fiberglass insulation.....you know the type...it is very pink ..(usually). Well in this instance it was black with the potentially toxic type molds Chaetomium and Stacybotrys.

What can I do to not get mold ?

There is no place on earth that I can put water and food and not have something grow. Keep the relative humidity below 45% and do not provide food for mold. Food is paper, wood, cellulose and dirt to name a few. Latex paint, grain and other materials can also be food for mold. Cardboard boxes for storage can be very bad, newspapers in storage also will love to feed mold. You get the picture !

Can contents be the source of mold when testing?



Contents can provide significant contamination to the tested area. Conversely, the contents can become contaminated from the building, which can cause damage to the contents and be a source to spread the contamination to other areas. Handling the contents can be a source of exposure which can affect the health of sensitive individuals. Because of this, the contents must be considered in the assessment. Handling and storage of the contents should be considered in a remediation plan, your personal protection plan while handling these materials, and from this point forward.

What can I do to properly store contents to avoid mold ?



Moisture in storage areas must be controlled by methods such as de-humidification. Cardboard should not be used as storage. Papers and other organic materials will grow mold in these areas. Stored items should be kept in containers that will not support the growth of mold such as plastic bags and plastic bins. Dirt will also support the growth of mold, very often the more potentially toxic molds and should be avoided. In other words, clean clothes are less likely to become contaminated and stained than dirty cloths, etc.

What do I do if my contents are contaminated?

Hard surface items such as plates, plastic toys and the like are easy to clean. However, one warning, getting the materials out of the storage area needs done carefully. If you have objects covered with mold and drag them from the attic to the outside, you will spread the mold through the house. Enclosed these items in plastic bags or the like before moving them.

How should I move contents ?

They need handled carefully. Picture the dandelion that has gone from yellow peals to white seeds trying to turn the next perfectly manicured lawn into a vast sea of dandelions. Those white thongs blow everywhere. That is what you should picture is happening with the mold spores on the contents you are moving. Persons handling the moldy materials should wear personal protection and contain the items in plastic or other materials. Professionals use air scrubbers to capture the spores floating in the air and a negative air system to vent the air from the contaminated area to the exterior. That is really the proper method and equipment to use.

Can I save precious books and pictures ?

Yes, Freeze drying can protect and preserve valuable materials such as photos and family bibles, and other cloth and paper heirlooms.

What can be done about mold in crawlspace or basement soil ?



The mold can't be killed by spraying the top of the soil. The mold lives down in the soil, so topical cleaning just will not work. These areas can be covered with a membrane that will seal the expose soil from letting the mold into the home. These areas operate even more reliably when an exhaust fan, very similar to an exhaust system used for radon mitigation is installed under the membrane. This system also works well to reduce mold coming into a home from an interior French rain system.