

Fungi and Molds:

There are more than a million species of fungi. Fungi are plant-like organisms that lack chlorophyll. Since fungi do not produce chlorophyll for food, fungi must absorb food from other sources. Fungi do not use light to make food therefore; fungi will grow in damp and dark places. Fungi generally consume dead matter such as paper, leaves, cardboard, and wood.

Mold is a term used to commonly describe the wooly growth that occurs on damp or decaying organic matter caused from the growth of fungi. Mold in homes is a cause for concern for two main reasons. First, structural damage may follow from mold growth on or inside walls and other areas in the home. When molds have grown on walls, they may have also grown through the wallboard into the internal space of the wall. Mold growth on carpets and other items in a room can occur at the same time. The molds associated with indoor environment problems grow on damp or wet materials containing cellulose, such as lumber, drywall, insulation, carpet and carpet pad, furniture, and other items which are sources of nutrients.



The second concern regarding indoor molds is their potential link to human illness and disease. Most often mold spores are considered allergens. High airborne levels of the fungal spores have been associated with many allergic complaints. When exposed some people may experience hay fever or asthma attacks due to respiratory irritation. Some molds do produce mycotoxins (naturally occurring poisons) which can be harmful to humans.



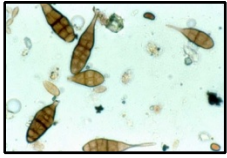
If you have mold in your home you will know it. It is visible and when present in large quantities emits a stuffy musty odor. The most serious mold infestations occur following water intrusion in buildings, (burst water pipes, persistent leaks, flooding). If you have mold in your home it is not necessary to determine what type of mold you may have. All molds should be treated the same with respect to potential health risks. To fix the mold problem you have to eliminate the moisture problem permanently, dry and clean all material surfaces and all the molds should be removed.



The following list is a compilation of different fungi (molds) that are quite common in our area. It is presented here for informational purposes only. It is not a complete list of all types of molds.



Aspergillus is a fungus whose spores are present in the air we breathe, but does not normally cause illness. Aspergillosis is a group of diseases which can result from aspergillus infection and includes invasive aspergillosis, and aspergilloma. Individuals who suffer from asthma and other respiratory diseases are at a greater risk for these infections.



Alternaria is one of the most prevalent fungi in the environment. Spores are generally airborne and concentrations will peak during the summer and early fall seasons of the year. The spores are known to be prevalent sources of allergens in the atmosphere, generally causing symptoms associated with respiratory problems. Such symptoms include allergic rhinitis (hay fever), asthma, and hypersensitivity pneumonitis. Several studies have shown associations between *Alternaria* and severe asthma.



Aureobasidium (Pullularia) yeast-like fungus is commonly found on caulk or damp window frames in bathrooms and on siding outdoors. This mold is a type of mildew which may be pink or black in color. Its growth form is yeast-like its cells/spores only become airborne through mechanical

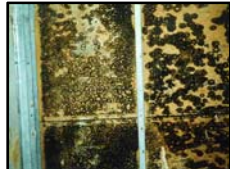


disruption of contaminated materials or aspiration of contaminated

water. Pullularia occurs indoors in areas of free water, such as condensate pans, or as a primary colonist of broadloom following a flood. It is also commonly found growing indoors on surfaces that are continually damp in bathrooms and kitchens such as shower curtains, tile grout and window sills.



Stachybotrys chartarum (also known by its synonym *Stachybotrys atra*) is a greenish-black mold. It can grow on material with a high cellulose and low nitrogen content, such as fiberboard, gypsum board, paper, dust, and lint. Growth occurs when there is moisture from water damage, excessive humidity, water leaks, condensation, water infiltration, or flooding. Constant moisture is required for its growth.



Chaetomium is a fungal genus that includes approximately 80 different species. The species that is reported to be growing in building interiors and present in air samples is *C. globosum*. It is often found outdoors growing on soil and plant debris.

