

MOLD ALLERGY PREVENTION and CONTROL

Mold and mold spores are in the environment year-round, indoors and out. Although they are more prevalent in warm humid climates, molds exist everywhere.

Mold spores are the reproductive part of mold or fungus that actually cause allergic reactions. Molds feed off decomposing plant and animal matter and grow by producing filament-like clusters. Mold and fungi reproduce by giving off huge numbers of mold spores into the air, similar to plants releasing pollen. When airborne mold spores settle on organic matter, new mold clusters are grown. When mold spores are inhaled, they may trigger an allergic reaction.

Mold and mildew growth is obvious when it grows in bathrooms along tile grout in shower stalls. However, mold can also grow in the following places:

- Closets and storerooms
- Foam pillows
- Refrigerator door gaskets
- Self-defrosting refrigerator water pans
- Refrigerator cooling coils
- Under-sink cabinets
- Room air conditioner units
- Washing machines
- Dryer vents
- Garbage cans
- Basements
- Carpets
- Sheetrock and wallboard

Common symptoms of mold allergies include:

- Sneezing
- Chronic cough
- Runny nose
- Nasal congestion
- Itchy, watery and red eyes
- Skin rashes and hives
- Sinus headaches
- Reduced lung capacity and difficulty breathing

It is impossible to avoid contact with molds completely, however you may reduce your exposure by implementing some of the following guidelines:

- Use exhaust fans in bathrooms to reduce the humidity levels.
- Use a mold-killing solution (such as 1 to 10 bleach/water solution) in bathrooms and shower stalls, on bathroom tiles, shower curtains, around the bathtub and toilet tank.
- Use paint with a mold inhibitor, or add a mold inhibitor to standard paint for use in baths.
- Replace bathroom carpets with tile or linoleum.
- Use a chemical moisture remover in closets.
- Never put away wet shoes.
- Use exhaust fans in the kitchen to remove cooking steam and food vapors.
- Repair all water leaks promptly.
- Use a dehumidifier to keep the relative humidity below 40 percent to deter mold growth.
- Use a simple humidity gauge to regularly measure levels in your home.
- Consider installing a high-performance electrostatic filter in your central air conditioning and heating system to trap mold spores and inhibit mold production.
- Never put damp clothing in closets or drawers.

The following molds listed on the back are commonly found in this area

- HORMODENDRUM** - found on decomposing plants, leather, rubber, cloth, paper and wood products. Spores are released in great numbers after rains and damp weather. This type of spore is very common in the air, sometimes making up half of the total spore count. The highest levels occur from mid summer through December, and the daily peak of spore count is between 11 A.M. and 3 P.M. The fungus grows on organic debris in the soil and on dead leaves, it may also parasitize living leaves of some plants.
- ALTERNARIA** - it causes several diseases of plants and has been found in the lungs and in skin infections in man. This mold stays high in the summer as well as the winter. This type of spore is very common in the air from late Spring into Fall, especially from noon until 3 P.M. daily. The fungus grows on organic debris in the soil and also parasitizes leaves, stems, flowers, and fruits of many vegetables, cereal grains, and ornamental plants (such as tomato, bean, chrysanthemum, and cabbage.)
- PULLULARIA** - it is normally found in soil, but also on decaying vegetation, plants, and caulking compounding. The spores are most plentiful in the air during the afternoon (1-5 P.M.)
- ASPERGILLUS** - it can be found growing on any substance, frequently found in damp hay, grain, sausage and fruit. It is also used to make the preservative citric acid and gives coffee beans their flavor. It grows on stored food products under damp conditions. One species is common on wet surfaces in bathrooms and in drip pans of refrigerators and other appliances.
- PENICILLIUM** - Colonies of this fungus are often found blue or green in color, and may be seen on food and other organic materials (citrus fruits, jams, bread, apples, leather, in the home.) The spores are plentiful inside the house during Winter, and show up at the highest levels around 2 P.M.
- FUSARIUM** - it grows as a parasite on green plants such as peas, beans, cotton, tomato, corn, sweet potato, rice and also on decaying plants. This may be especially common in the air after a rain. Many Fusarium species are parasitic on vegetable and field crops, and spores may be released from infected grasses and cereals and from stores fruits and vegetables such as cucumbers, tomatoes, and potatoes.
- MUCOR** - normal soil inhabitant. Found around barns and barnyards where it grows on animal waste.
- PHOMA** - grows on paper products, such as books and magazines, certain paints and green plants.
- RHODOTORULA** - This is a common species of yeast, easily identified by it's orange color and commonly found in air and water contaminants.
- HELMINTHOSPORIUM** - These spores are fairly common in the air, especially those produced by leaf parasites of grasses and cereal grains, such as corn, wheat, oat and rye. Grain threshing operations release large quantities of these spores into the air. The daily peak of spore production in nature is around 2 P.M.
- CEPHALOSPORIUM** - This is especially common in the air after a rain. Colonies growing saprophytically on organic debris in the soil are probably the main source of airborne spores; a similar type of spore is produced by cephalosporium species associated with wilt diseases of trees.
- CANDIDA ALBICANS** - It is seldom met airborne. It is common in soil, organic debris and in humans where it occurs most frequently as a saprophyte in the nasopharynx and faeces. It may cause clinically significant infections such as thrush in infants and skin infections in the diabetic.