



Meigs County Health Department
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The American Lung Association lists numerous indoor air pollutants that cause or contribute to respiratory diseases such as cancer, infections and asthma. Some of the more common indoor air pollutants include household cleaning chemicals, lead, carbon monoxide, mold, dust, radon, secondhand smoke and even pet dander. One of the most asked about indoor air pollutants is mold. Mold is a common type of fungi that thrives in moist, warm conditions both outdoors and indoors. Fungi are any groups of any spore-producing organisms that feed on organic matter. Molds are a necessary part of the world we live in. Indoor mold is actually common at low levels. Mold normally appears as fuzzy or slimy shaped dots in several possible colors – blue, green, yellow, brown, gray, black or white. Each colony of mold growths produce tiny, microscopic “seeds” called spores. These spores can travel through the air until landing on a moist surface where they begin to grow and multiply. When humans come in contact with the mold spores several different reactions can occur, some more severe than others such as wheezing, asthma attacks, sinus congestion, dry, hacking cough, burning or watery eyes, sneezing fits, bloody noses, skin rashes or hives, headaches, memory loss, mood changes, and even body aches. Some people are unaffected by mold but others who have a mold allergy can have severe reactions from even a small amount of mold spores. Those at higher risks for severe health effects from mold are infants, children, immune compromised patients, pregnant women, individuals with existing respiratory conditions, and the elderly. The state of Ohio has no standards for mold exposure nor has the federal government enacted laws and regulations related to mold exposure limits. No certification or licensing requirements exist in Ohio for mold inspectors and remediators

If you can see mold growth and/or smell a musty odor, you likely have a growing mold problem. Many times, molds can be spotted around windows and doors or in bathrooms. Both locations are usually humid or produce condensation. Mold testing or air sampling is typically not necessary if mold growths are visible. It is more important to find the cause of the moisture and to clean it up than to spend money on expensive mold tests. You cannot eliminate all molds from your home but, you can control the growth of mold by taking these preventive measures inside and outside your home.

- **Improve air flow inside your home.** When warm, moist air quickly cools, it releases the moisture that was in the air. In our homes these cooler areas are in the closets, window and door frames, or behind furniture. To improve air flow and equal out the temperature differences, open closest doors and move furniture slightly away from the walls.
- **Change filters on your furnace and air conditioners regularly.** Have forced air heating ducts inspected and, if necessary, cleaned.
- **Eliminate sources of dampness in basements, such as leaking plumbing or groundwater seepage.** Seal or fix any basement wall cracks. It is also recommended to use a basement sealer on the interior walls.



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- **Prevent moisture with proper ventilation.** Cooking dinner, taking a shower, or drying a load of laundry will cause a high moisture level inside your home if there is no ventilation. Remember that mold must have warm, moist conditions to grow. Install or repair exhaust fans in bathrooms and kitchens.
- **Use a dehumidifier** in any areas of your home that smells musty or damp. Keep the humidity (moisture) levels between 40-60% percent.
- **Promote good drainage** away from your house by removing leaves and vegetation from around the foundation and cleaning out rain gutters.
- **Declutter basements and storage areas.** Items that contain paper, cardboard, or fabric provide the organic material for molds to grow on.

If you find mold in your home you can safely clean it up on your own. The following are tips for cleaning or removing visible mold.

- **Stop the moisture.** Fix plumbing leaks and other water intrusion problems before cleaning. Remember, mold has to have moisture to grow.
- **Scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water.** DO NOT MIX BLEACH AND AMMONIA CONTAINING PRODUCTS. The mixture creates a toxic vapor.
- **Disinfect areas with a solution of water and bleach** (½ cup of bleach per gallon of water) to prevent mold from reoccurring. Straight bleach will *not* be more effective and will likely damage the surfaces.
- **Let these areas dry naturally.** This extended drying time is important to prevent future mold growth. Surfaces should be completely dry within one to two days.
- **Absorbent or porous materials, such as ceiling tiles, carpet and drywall, may have to be thrown away if they become moldy.** Mold can grow on or fill in any porous materials, so the mold may be difficult or impossible to remove completely.
- **During the cleaning process, avoid exposing yourself or others to mold.** Wear old clothes and shoes that you can launder or throw away after the cleanup work. Wear a mask or respirator, in addition to goggles and gloves. Turn off your furnace and air conditioner and cover ducts and doors to contain mold spores.

Additional information about mold and other indoor pollutants is available on the health department's website at www.meigs-health.com or by speaking with an environmental health specialist at 740-992-6626.

Steve Swatzel, REHS, Director of Environmental Health

