



Mold Issues in Commercial Facilities

An Inside Look at the Mold Issues in Commercial Facilities

Fungi include yeast, mold, mildew and mushrooms. Fungi grow over a wide range of environmental niches and are able to colonize on any surface, provided **moisture** is present over time. Spores are very lightweight and are easily dispersed in air.

Every building is subject to moisture problems, either due to leakage (flooding, pipes bursting, and overflows) or routine activities (bathrooms, watering indoor plants, cooking). Molds are easily distributed indoors due to natural breezes, heating/ventilation and cooling systems, humidifiers and active movement.

Molds are known to cause a variety of health effects, including mild skin infections to severe allergic reactions to lung disease, cancer, organ failure, neurological disorders and death.

Table 1: Sources of Indoor Moisture

Problem Sources	Common Sources
Flooding	Steam from cooking
Backed-up sewers	Wet clothes or indoor drying lines
Toilet overflows	Appliance drip pans
Clogged drains	Appliances vented indoors – cloths dryer
Leaky roofs	Humidifiers
Mud or ice dams	Damp basement or crawl spaces
Leaking pipes	House plants or attached greenhouses
Outside water intrusion	Shower or bath steam and leaks
	Clothes dryers vented indoors
	Condensation on windows or walls
	Firewood
	High indoor humidity
	Window condensate
	Vaporizers
	Limited ventilation

The most common indoor molds are ***Cladosporium***, ***Penicillium***, and ***Aspergillus***. These are primarily associated with allergic reactions, headaches, itchy eyes, rashes and respiratory problems, but also known to produce mycotoxins, resulting in chemical toxicogenic responses. Perhaps the most disconcerting indoor mold is ***Stachybotrys chartarum***, also known as ***S. atra***. This mold, even in small doses, is associated with severe, often irreversible neurological conditions, lung disease and death.

The level of mold needed to make people sick varies with the individual. In general, if the mold is visible or odiferous, it should be eliminated.

Table 2: Symptoms Associated with Pathogenic Molds

Hay fever	Mood changes or irritability
Wheezing	Seizures
Coughing	Asthma
Sneezing	Difficulty in concentration
Earache	Memory loss
Sore throat	Headache
Shortness of breath	Kidney failure
Nausea	Rashes and dermatitis
Diarrhea	
Fever	
Chills	Others Suspected
Aches and pains	Infertility
Fatigue	Still birth
Tracheal bleeding	Hormonal imbalances
Nose bleed	Sudden infant death syndrome

Preventing a building from becoming moldy is far easier (and cheaper) than trying to eliminate a fungal colonization. The most important step for elimination of mold in buildings:

1. **Remove the moisture source.**
2. **Reduce the contaminant via routine cleaning and disinfecting. Numerous commercial products are widely available for disinfecting non-porous surfaces.**
3. **Carpeting and other porous material should be carefully removed.**

A mold inspection for a real estate transaction includes the following:

1. **Complete physical Home Inspection.**

2. **Air-Quality inspection typically requires a minimum of 2 samples.**
3. **Sample & analysis of visible mold (Dry Wall, Paneling, etc).**
4. **Comprehensive written report.**

For questions regarding mold or to schedule a mold inspection or air quality test, please contact **American Environmental Laboratories LLC at (314) 664-2800.**