



Diseases Fact Sheet - Mold

South Dakota Department of Health

Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

What is it?

Molds are small organisms found almost everywhere both outdoors and indoors. Molds reproduce by tiny, lightweight spores that drift in the air. Mold spores can survive for a long time. Molds can grow indoors on damp surfaces. Mold growth can be colored orange, white, green, brown or black.

How can mold become a problem in my home?

Molds grow in damp places. Sources of indoor dampness include: flooding, leaky roofs, sprinkler spray hitting the house, humidifiers, damp basement or crawl spaces, leaky pipes, house plants, steam from showers, saunas or cooking, wet clothes, clothes dryers vented indoors and appliances (like stoves) not exhausted outdoors.

How do you know if you have a mold problem?

If you can see mold or smell an earthy, musty odor, you probably have a mold problem.

What are the potential health effects of indoor mold growth?

High levels of exposure to some molds may cause illness in susceptible people. Typical symptoms include nasal and sinus congestion, eye irritation, dry or hacking cough, nose or throat irritation, and skin rashes or irritation. A physician should be contacted if you have questions regarding symptoms associated with mold exposure.

Should I test my home for mold?

Testing is not recommended as a first step to determine if you have a mold problem. If visible mold is present, sampling is not usually necessary. Proper sampling for mold is expensive and requires special equipment. In addition, federal standards for judging acceptable or tolerable quantities of mold have not been established. Since the Department of Health does not provide mold sampling services, residents must hire an environmental contractor to do the sampling. Mold inspection and cleanup is the duty of the homeowner.

What should I do if I find mold in my home?

If mold is growing in your home, you should clean it up and fix the moisture problem. If you clean up the mold, but do not fix the moisture problem, the mold will usually return. Normally, mold can be removed by cleaning with bleach and water (see the EPA's [“A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture, and Your Home”](#)). Large amounts of mold may require the expertise of a professional contractor.

How do I prevent indoor mold problems in my home?

- Fix plumbing leaks and other water problems as soon as possible. Dry all items completely.
- Scrub mold off of surfaces with detergent and dry completely.
- Throw out moldy carpets and moldy ceiling tiles.
- Clean and repair roof gutters regularly.
- Keep air conditioner drip pans and drain lines clean and unobstructed.
- Keep indoor humidity low (below 60%)
- Vent appliances that produce moisture. (i.e. clothes dryers, stoves)
- Use air conditioners and/or de-humidifiers when necessary.
- Run bathroom fan or open window when showering, cooking, washing dishes or running the dishwasher.

Related Sites:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- Environmental Protection Agency
 - [A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture, and Your Home](#)
 - [Mold Resources for Schools and Commercial Buildings](#)
- Federal Emergency Management Administration
 - [Dealing with Mold and Mildew in your Flood Damaged Home](#)
 - [Guide To Ensuring Your Home’s Air, Water, Walls & Soil are Safe for your Family](#)