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Frequently Asked Questions about Mold

What are Molds?

Molds are simple, microscopic organisms, present virtually everywhere, indoors and outdoors. For molds to grow and reproduce, they need only a food source - any organic material, such as leaves, wood, paper, or dirt- and moisture. Because molds grow by digesting the organic material, they gradually destroy whatever they grow on. Mold growth on surfaces can often be seen in the form of discoloration, frequently green, gray, brown, or black but also white and other colors. Molds release countless tiny, lightweight spores, which travel through the air.

How am I exposed to indoor molds?

Everyone is exposed to some mold on a daily basis without evident harm. It is common to find mold spores in the air inside homes, and most of the airborne spores found indoors come from outdoor sources. Mold spores primarily cause health problems when they are present in large numbers and people inhale many of them. This occurs primarily when there is active mold growth within home, office or school where people live or work. People can also be exposed to mold by touching contaminated materials and by eating contaminated foods.

Can mold become a problem in my home?

Molds will grow and multiply whenever conditions are right-sufficient moisture is available and organic material is present. Be on the lookout in your home for common sources of indoor moisture that may lead to mold problems: flooding, leaky roofs, sprinkler spray hitting the house, plumbing leaks, overflow from sinks or sewers, damp basement or crawl space, steam from shower or cooking, humidifiers and wet clothes drying indoors or clothes dryers exhausting indoors. Warping floors and discoloration of walls and ceilings can be indications of moisture problems. Condensation on windows or walls is also an important indication, but it can sometimes be caused by an indoor combustion problem. Have fuel-burning appliances routinely inspected by your local utility or a professional heating contractor.

Should I be concerned about mold in my home?

Yes, if indoor mold contamination is extensive, it can cause very high and persistent airborne spore exposures. Persons exposed to high spore levels can become sensitized and develop allergies to the mold or other health problems. Mold growth can damage your furnishings, such as carpets, sofas and cabinets. Clothes and shoes in damp closets can become soiled. In time, unchecked mold growth can cause serious damage to the structural elements in your home. If you can see or smell mold inside your home, take steps to identify and eliminate the excess moisture and to cleanup and remove the mold.

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What symptoms are commonly seen with mold exposure?

Molds produce health effects through inflammation, allergy, or infection. Allergic reactions (often referred to as hay fever) are most common following mold exposure. Typical symptoms that mold-exposed persons report (alone or in combination) include:

- Respiratory problems, such as wheezing, difficulty breathing, and shortness of breath
- Nasal and sinus congestion
- Eye irritation (burning, watery, or reddened eyes)
- Dry, hacking cough
- Nose or throat irritation
- Skin rashes or irritation

Headaches, memory problems, mood swings, nosebleeds, body aches and pains, and fevers are occasionally reported in mold cases, but their cause is not understood.

How can I tell if I have mold in my house?

You may suspect that you have mold if you see discolored patches or cottony or speckled growth on walls or furniture or if you smell an earthy or musty odor. You also may suspect mold contamination if mold-allergic individuals experience some of the symptoms listed above when in the house. Evidence of past or ongoing water damage should also trigger more thorough inspection. You may find mold growth underneath water-damaged surfaces or behind walls, floors or ceilings.

Can cleaning up mold be hazardous to my health?

Yes. During the cleaning process, you may be exposed to mold, strong detergents, and disinfectants. Spore counts may be 10 to 1000 times higher than background levels when mold-contaminated materials are disturbed. Call Paradise Disaster Restoration to assist in cleaning mold in your house.

Can air ducts become contaminated with mold?

Yes. Air duct systems can become contaminated with mold. Duct systems may be constructed of bare sheet metal, sheet metal with fibrous glass insulation on the exterior, or sheet metal with an internal fibrous glass liner, or they may be made entirely of fibrous glass. Bare sheet metal systems and sheet metal with exterior fibrous glass insulation can be cleaned and disinfected. If water damaged ductwork is made of sheet metal with an internal fibrous glass liner or made entirely of fibrous glass, this will often need to be removed and discarded. Ductwork in difficult-to-reach locations may have to be abandoned.

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How can I prevent indoor mold problems in my home?

Inspect your home regularly for the indications and sources of indoor moisture and mold. Take steps to eliminate sources of water as quickly as possible. By calling Paradise Disaster Restoration we will assist you in the removal of water and will dry out your house correctly to help in preventing the growth of mold.

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