



Labrador - Grenfell
Health

FACTS ABOUT MOULD, STACHYBOTRYS AND YOUR HEALTH

What are moulds?

Moulds are a type of micro-organism called “fungi” that can be found both indoors and outdoors. They grow best in warm, damp, and humid conditions, and spread and reproduce by making spores (a protective covering that some micro-organisms create around themselves to protect them from the harsh environment so they live longer).

Where are they found?

Moulds are found in virtually every environment and can be detected both indoors and outdoors year round. They can be present in some workplaces such as farms and affect workers such as farmers who deal with mouldy hay. Some common species of mould are, Cladosporium, Penicillium, Alternaria, Aspergillus.

What is Stachybotrys chartarum (Stachybotrys atra)?

Stachybotrys chartarum is a greenish-black mould that can grow on fiberboard, gypsum board, paper, dust, and lint. They grow best when there is moisture from water damage, excessive humidity, water leaks, condensation, water infiltration, or flooding.

Does it matter what type of mould is growing in my house/school, etc.?

No. All moulds in buildings should be treated the same with respect to potential health risks and removal.

How do moulds in buildings affect people?

Moulds, such as the ones commonly found in damp buildings, can primarily affect the respiratory system. People who are already prone to Hayfever and Asthma may be more susceptible to respiratory illness due to mould than other people. For these people, exposure to those moulds can cause symptoms such as nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, wheezing (shortness of breath like the type seen in someone having an Asthma attack), or skin irritation, upon contact. The symptoms closely resemble that one would get with Hayfever or Asthma.

Can I be tested for mould exposure?

Routine screening for mould exposure is not recommended. Blood tests, whilst available in some areas, only indicate that the person has previously been exposed to mould and that the person is sensitive to mould. They do not measure the level of mould in the body.

A blood test does not indicate where the person might have been exposed to mould and does not necessarily predict who will become ill from mould exposure.

What kind of treatment does someone affected by building mould need to have?

Since the majority of symptoms will be similar to those seen in people who have Hayfever or Asthma, the treatment will be similar and may include brand names such as “Benadryl” and/or various inhaler-type medications. Please contact your clinical healthcare professional or pharmacist for the best treatment options.

How can people decrease mould exposure?

Sensitive individuals should avoid areas that are likely to have mould, such as compost piles, cut grass, and wooded areas. If there is mould growth in your home, you should clean up the mould and fix the water problem. Mould growth can be removed from hard surfaces with commercial products, soap and water, **or** a bleach solution of no more than 1 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water.

How do I test for mould in an indoor environment?

Generally, it is not necessary to carry out commercial testing to identify the species of mould growing. Labrador-Grenfell Health in accordance with Health Canada and the US Centre for Disease Control (CDC), does not recommend routine environmental sampling for moulds as the standards for judging what is and what is not an acceptable or tolerable quantity of mould have not been established.

No matter what type of mould is present, you should arrange for its removal.

I heard about "toxic moulds" that grow in homes and other buildings. Should I be concerned about a serious health risk to me and my family?

The term "toxic mould" **is not accurate**. While certain moulds are toxigenic, meaning they can produce toxins (specifically mycotoxins), the moulds themselves are not toxic, or poisonous. Hazards presented by moulds that may produce mycotoxins should be considered the same as other common moulds which can grow in your house. **Mould is found everywhere** - in the air and on many surfaces. There are very few reports that toxigenic moulds found in indoor environments can cause unique or rare health conditions. A causal link between the presence of the toxigenic mould and these conditions has not been proven.

PLEASE NOTE:

Not all internet information is reliable. When researching such topics it is important to be very selective and rely on information sources that have been peer reviewed or produced by a reputable organization such as Health Canada or the USA's Centre for Disease Control (CDC).

A publication from the Office of the Medical Officer of Health, March 28, 2012.



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Further information specific to Canada is available at Health Canada's website:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/promotion/public-publique/home-maison/mould-moisissure-eng.php>.

www.lghealth.ca

