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# FACTS ABOUT MOLD

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# HEALTHY HOMES

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## What is mold?

- Mold (mildew), mushrooms, and yeast are all types of *fungi*. Fungi are found both indoors and outdoors.
- Hundreds of different kinds of mold are commonly found in the United States and New York City.

## How do I recognize it?

- Mold can be many different colors. It may look furry, slimy, or powdery.
- Some mold has a musty, stale, or earthy odor.
- Mold usually grows in damp places, such as bathrooms and basements.

## What does mold need to grow?

- Mold needs water and food. It can grow almost anywhere there is water, high humidity, or damp conditions.
- Mold grows faster in warm temperatures and high humidity.
- Mold can feed on paper, fabric, wallpaper glue, sheetrock, wood, soap scum, leather, and many other surfaces.

## How are people exposed to mold?

- You can breathe in mold particles if mold is disturbed or damaged.
- You can also breathe in tiny spores (similar to seeds) that mold may release into the air.
- You can touch mold and get it on your skin.
- You can swallow mold if you eat moldy or spoiled food.

## What are the health effects of mold?

- Some people are allergic to molds.
- Mold exposure may trigger or worsen asthma symptoms.
- Some of the most common symptoms of mold exposure are congestion, cough, and runny nose.
- More severe reactions to mold may occur among workers exposed to large amounts of mold on the job, such as farmers working with moldy hay.

## Should I see a doctor if I have been exposed to mold?

- If you think that you or your children have symptoms related to mold exposure, you should see a doctor. Keep in mind that many symptoms associated with mold exposure are also caused by many other illnesses.



## **How can mold be prevented?**

- The best way is to remove water and moisture sources. Fixing leaks, drying damp areas, and removing humidity from the air (e.g., using a dehumidifier in basements; cracking a window while taking a shower in bathrooms with no exhaust vent) will help stop mold growth and keep it from coming back.

## **How can I safely clean mold in my home?**

- Use soap or a detergent, and water to clean small areas of mold (less than 10 square feet) on walls or other hard surfaces as soon as you see it.
  - Wear waterproof gloves.
  - Dry the cleaned area completely.
- If the mold returns quickly or spreads, there may be an underlying problem such as a water leak. To stop mold, water problems must be fixed.
- If large areas of mold are present, you may need a professional mold abatement company. Companies must be licensed with the New York State Department of Labor. For resources on finding licensed companies in your area, see “More Information” on the back cover.

## What does my landlord have to do?

- Your landlord and building manager must keep your building in good condition so mold will not grow. This means repairing water leaks and correcting persistently high humidity levels.
- If you have a lot of mold (more than 10 square feet) or it keeps coming back after you have cleaned it, ask your landlord to fix the problem.
- If the problem isn't fixed, call 311.

## More Information

- The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Call 311, or visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) and search "Mold."
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Visit [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) (type "mold" in the search box).
- Mold abatement companies must be licensed with the New York State Department of Labor. For a list of licensed contractors, visit <https://labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/safetyhealth/mold/licensing.shtm>.

